

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

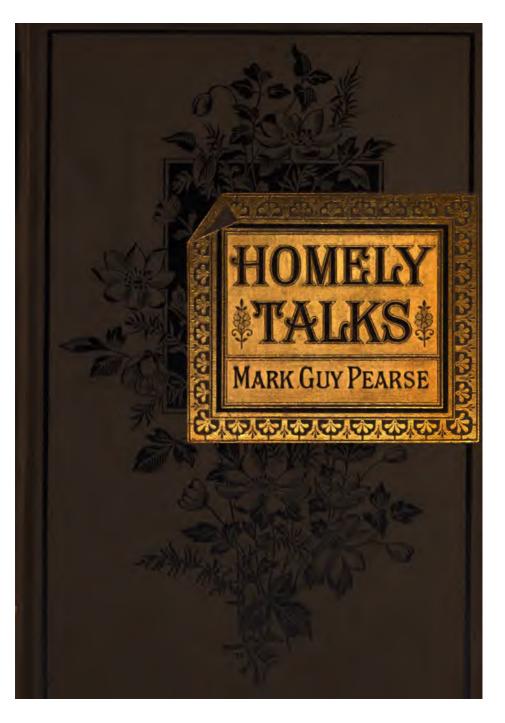
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

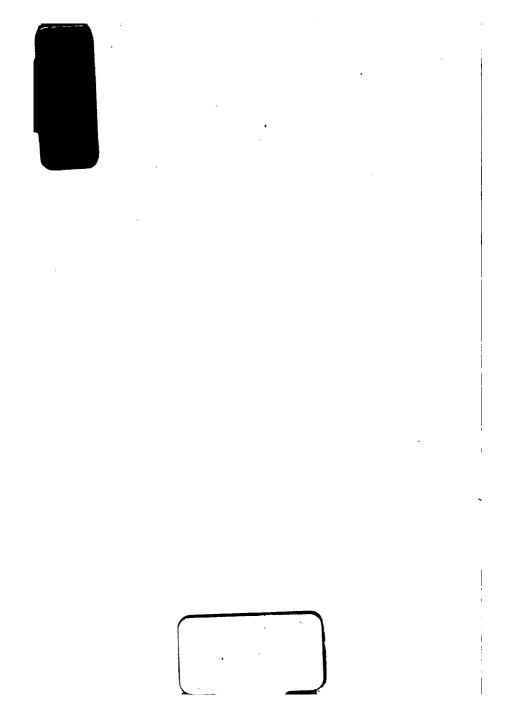
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + Refrain from automated querying Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

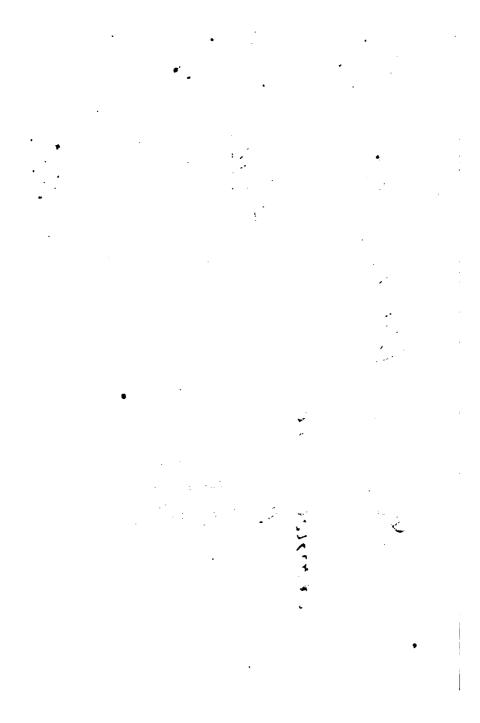
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at http://books.google.com/





		•		
	•			
-				
		,		



HOMELY TALKS.

BY

MARK GUY PEARSE,

AUTHOR OF "DANIEL QUORM" "MISTER HORN," ETC., ETC

FOURTH THOUSAND.



LONDON:

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE, 2, CASTLE STREET, CITY ROAD.

SOLD AT 66, PATERNOSTER ROW. 1880.

141. m. 927.

Printed by Hazell, Watson, and Viney, London and Aylesbury.

To

DANIEL RADFORD, ESQ.,

AND

MRS. RADFORD,

OF

LYDFORD BRIDGE, DEVON,

IN HAPPY MEMORY OF DAYS ON DARTMOOR,

3 Dedicate this Book.

		,

PREFACE.

THESE pages are written for that large class of readers, perhaps the largest class, whose only reading time is their *leisure* time. They do not sit down for study, but for rest and entertainment.

And of this class there are happily not a few to whom the hour is most welcome when it is made a time of hallowed entertainment, a refreshment of spirit. They go forth, like Isaac at eventide, to meditate, glad to leave for a little while the toil and bustle. And yet they cannot go far from earth, seldom soaring over it, and never utterly forgetting it; for here too as with him of old, new cares are close at hand. Isaac went forth to meditate at eventide, and behold the camels were coming.

For busy men and burdened women, who rest on the stile for a few minutes, laying down the load and lifting up the eyes to sky and tree, plucking a flower or listening to the songs of happy birds, or looking out over the stretch of landscape, then on again towards claims and calls that wait for them—to help these, to comfort and strengthen and instruct them, is the aim of these pages.

And for the busy and burdened there is a Blessed Gospel. We need to know of God as the God of our lives, caring not for men's souls only, but for all that belongs to us, lovingly concerned in all that concerns us; ordering all our affairs in uttermost wisdom, and seeking in all work and discipline and pleasure to make us truer and better.

We need to know of Jesus as our Blessed Brother-Man. We want more than the pure memory of Him, as one who dwelt amongst men far back, in that more favoured time;—His going away has left life lonelier and all time emptier if that is all. We want more than the glorified King who sitteth far above earth's commonplace things and commonplace people. We want more than the Christ to be, a coming burst of Triumphant Splendour. We want that most tender, most real Brother, right in our midst, at home and in the market, at the desk and in the workshop; uplifting and hallowing by His Presence all the round of work and all the relationships; redeeming the whole life from destruction.

There is no recognition here of the doubts and difficulties of this intellectual age. But here, I trust,

on every page will be found His Presence 'who dissolveth doubts.' He is the Light of men that He may be their Life, and in turn the Life that He may be the Light. Doubts are not destroyed by assertions. not even by proofs. We may distract the doubter more easily than convince. Doubts, like thistle-down, are often sown by being scattered. That thousands do know by deep and constant experience that these things are so, is most helpful and convincing to the seeker after truth. The bit of logic that satisfies men most is a Christlike life. The most masterly treatise on the Evidences of Christianity is a sanctified man or woman. The only proof and seal of our religion is in the truth and faithfulness and charity, the trustful patience, the cheerful hope, the pure goodness that grow out of the life of God in the soul.

CLIFTON, Sept. 1880.

CONTENTS.

CHAP. I. A GOLDEN MOTTO FOR THE NEW YEAR			FAGE. I
II. OUR HEAVENLY FATHER			12
III. THE HOMELINESS OF JESUS			26
IV. DEPRESSION: A TALK FOR A DULL DAY			38
V. SUNSHINE: A TALK FOR HAPPY TIMES			54
VI. WITH US, AND YET UNKNOWN			68
VII. SPRING-TIME: A TALK FOR A MAY DAY			80
VIII. A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING			92
IX. FURTHER TEACHING OF THE SPRING-TIM	1E		105
X. ONE-SIDED RELIGION	•		116
XI. 'A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT'			132
XII. JACOB'S COURTSHIP AND WHAT IT DID FO	R HI	M	145
XIII. AUTUMN CHANGES: A WORD FOR WORL	KERS		156
XIV. A WITHERED HAND			168
XV. THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES			179
XVI. JAIRUS: A PATTERN FOR PARENTS .			191
XVII. 'STORMY WIND FULFILLING HIS WORD			203
XVIII. THE FLIGHT IN THE WINTER: A TALK	FOR	A	
COLD DAY	•	•	214
XIX. A CHRISTMAS STORY: A TALK TO THE CHI	LDRE	N	224
XX. THE YEAR'S ACCOUNT			236

HOMELY TALKS.

T

A GOLDEN MOTTO FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Wear, looking along the way in which we must go, and wondering. Whither will it lead us? What shall we find in this strange country? There are vague guessings and fond hopes; there are whispered fears and strong wishes. But over all lies uncertainty—a mist that spreads about the valleys and creeps half up the hill-sides, chilling and dismal. Life itself is so frail; and our hold upon things that are more than life to us is altogether so insecure; and in the past there is so much of failure; and however long our life may be, there is so much less of it left to us now. So we look away and fear.

But here at our right hand is our loving Father.— He has gone forth all along the way. HE arranges; HE provides. Right into our heart there comes the warm, comforting gladness of His blessed presence. 'Dear child,' saith He, 'have I ever failed thee? Has the provision ever run short? Has My guidance ever led thee in a wrong path?' Stand upon the boundary-line and look back as well as forward. Oh, how wisely has He led us all along our way! How infinite His love has been! How bountifully He has dealt with us! How pitiful and patient! How often He has forgiven, and at what infinite cost! How wonderfully delivered,—how graciously restored us! Lo, He is mine! And I am His! He leads me along this new way. He encompasses me with the wings of His love. 'The God of my mercy.' Surely our grateful faith wakes up with a new song to greet the New Year: 'I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me.'

From a 'golden psalm of David' let us take our golden motto:

'THE GOD OF MY MERCY SHALL GO BEFORE ME.'
(Psalm lix. 10.)

Let us set out with a firm grasp of our Father's hand.—There is one thing more pitiable, almost worse, than even cold, black, miserable atheism. To kneel down and say, 'Our Father,' and then to get up and live an orphaned life. To stand and say, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty,' and then to go fretting and fearing, saying with a thousand tongues, 'I believe in the love of God,—but it is only in heaven. I believe in the power of God,—but it stoppeth short at the stars. I believe in the providence of God,—but it is limited to the saints in Scripture. I believe that "the Lord reigneth,"—only with reference to some far-off time with which we have nothing to do.' That is more

insulting to our Heavenly Father, more harmful to the world, more cheating to ourselves, than to have no God at all. 'I like to feel that I have a tremendous faith in the Lord,' a man said once. 'A tremendous faith' is what we always want. Let us see God in everything. Let us find Him everywhere. Be quite sure that His love and power and wisdom are at work, in our home and our business, in the country and the world. 'His kingdom ruleth over all': over the Church, and over the children, and over all the house; over the week-day work, as well as the Sunday work; and over the wages, too. Say it to your heart until you come to rest in it: My God.

Have these words any meaning to us, or do we trip over them lightly as mere Hebrew poetry? 'He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust.' It is ours to have it always as a sweet reality. Under His feathers: what completeness of protection! what snugness and safety! Do you think it is only a figure that must not be pushed too far? Look: there stands Jesus over you, beholding you. He sees how worried you are, how burdened and fretting; how you spend your time and strength in counting up your hindrances, and in dwelling on your weakness; and all the time His tender, yearning love longs to fold you to Himself 'as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.'

The God of Mercy.—How blessed a name is this! What a boundless generosity is His! Have you thought how our God delights to give?

with a lavish, God-like abundance. Look up into the expanse of the heavens. You have thought of His Power and of His Wisdom. Think, too, of how much giving it takes to satisfy His Love. Here is no scanty dole; no measured expenditure keeping its strict account lest it should give too much: these shining worlds to make night beautiful! See Him Who can only content Himself with such unbounded bounty. You have thought of the endless variety of life and beauty in nature; flower and leaf, plant and tree, the exquisite shape, the distinct and perfect beauty, the soft mosses, the hoary lichens, the dainty ferns, the gentle flowers, the changeful glory of the sky and sea. Trace in them all a love so large and rich that it can only rest in such abundant blessing. The God of Mercy.

But there is a sweeter note than this. Mercy stoopeth lower, reacheth higher, goeth further, giveth more than all this. The God of Mercy delighteth to forgive, as well as to give. Ah, how much more that means! To save as well as to bless.

Yes, we may well fear as we enter upon the New Year. Not want or woe, not loss or sorrow, not sickness or death;—more than all these together, we fear sin. We fear lest this year should be cold, empty, dead, as too many have been before it. But here is our refuge and strength, therefore will not we fear. The God of our mercy goeth before us. Through all the year He is with us Who is able to save to the uttermost. It is only this giving that can satisfy Him: our uttermost salvation. All the host of heaven and the myriad forms of beauty sink as nothing beside the wonderful giving of His

mercy. Words are poor and empty to tell of love like this. Be still and dwell upon it all. of Mercy, what a giving is Thine! The Well-beloved: Thy best, Thy dearest. The only-begotten: Thine all! O Thou Emmanuel, God with us, can nothing satisfy Thy mercy? Hath Thy love no limits? stable is Thy birthplace; a manger Thy bed. Outcast, an hungered, plotted against, betrayed, smitten, spat upon, scourged, canst Thou endure more than this, O God of Mercy? Accursed of earth, forsaken of heaven, crucified for the world's sin: He gave Himself for us. And now this God of Mercy comes to you and me, as we stand upon the threshold of the New Year, and He goes along with us, our Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, our Deliverer. He cannot let us go alone. He comes to keep us in the way. 'Lo,' saith He, 'I am with vou alway.' The God of Mercy goeth with us.

Nor is this all. The crown is of pure gold, but there is one stone exceeding precious, a diamond flashing in its forefront. The God of my mercy shall go before me.

This little my is the burning-glass that collects the scattered rays of light and brings them all to one point—my. The Lord would have me take Him as all my very own. Mine-to guide and bless and save me as if there were no other needing Him in all the world. Mine—to love and trust and delight in as if I were His only child. His love to me is grieved with less than this,-He altogether mine; I altogether His.

The God of MY mercy! He from Whose hand

has come every blessing that I have ever had; Who gave me life; Who sent on before me the love that greeted my infancy, and made ready those gentle and holy surroundings that blessed my childhood and protected it; Who gave me reason and health, love and home, and all the good of life. What evils have been kept away! What threatening perils have passed harmlessly! See, faithful and loving, He Who has blest me thus is still beside me. He goes down with me to dwell in this strange land. The God of my mercy.

The God of my mercy! To Whom I came guitty and perishing, and He fell upon my neck and kissed me; made me feel the fulness of His love until my heart cried Father. He wrapt me in the best robe, as if nothing were too good for me. He put the ring upon my finger, as if He could not do enough. He took me home and made my sad heart merry with His favour. O, my soul, how hast thou grieved Him, and yet He hath never ceased to love thee! Come! wake up some glad note of triumph. He Who loves thee, and through Whom thou art more than conqueror, the God of thy mercy, He goeth with thee.

The God of my mercy! Think again, my soul, how when sorrow came He sustained and comforted, until thou didst bless the clouds that made the bow of His sure promise stand out in such vivid beauty. He delivered with such a mighty hand that ever since thou hast been glad that the tempest arose, for the furious winds and tumbling seas revealed to thee 'what manner of Man is this.' How tenderly He took the burden off thy shoulder and carried it

on His own! Thus His love has led thee all along a way of unceasing goodness, and has brought thee up into this goodly land. Be glad, then, in the Lord. All that thou hast ever found in Him thou shalt find still; and all thou canst ever need.

This God of my mercy goes before me. It is the way of His love; He goes on before, and has the blessing of His goodness waiting till we come. There is not a want of to-day but our Father provided for it thousands of years ago. The love that met us at the Cross with pardon has been waiting for us six thousand years. Our Saviour is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The God of my mercy goes before me—then I shall be guided aright. Rejoice, timid follower. I know not what the path may be, up hill or down; through the wilderness, or in garden of the Lord; but this I know: it will be the right path.

Look at the children of Israel as they move on through the wilderness: the Lord going before them, by day in the pillar of cloud, and in the pillar of fire by night. That is enough, let them follow on. The mountain rocks shut them in, or the pathless desert stretches all around them. What of that? God goes before them. Be quite sure that the God of our mercy will not be less to us than He was to them. The twilight of Gospel type was not brighter than is the noon of Gospel day. Take this simply, fully, to the letter, and rest in it: The God of my mercy shall go before me. There is no path of your life, at home, in business, in the Church, but if you will look trustfully, you shall see God going

before you. There is no perplexity, no event, however passing or trivial, but if you will only look, you shall find God leading you aright. We guess at our way and choose what we think best: so do we grieve the God of our mercy, and get ourselves into trouble. Set it up in letters of gold: The God of my mercy goeth before me. And let our work be neither choosing nor guessing, but following trustfully where He shall lead.

The God of my mercy goes before me: then He will know my need. Poor Israel! What chance is there for thee? Yonder is the furious Pharaoh with all his host. Here the Red Sea defies thee to advance. Better thou hadst tarried in Egypt! Lo, the God of their mercy goeth before them, and down, as in the hollow of His hand, the ransomed people march along a way of triumph, smooth with the golden sand, decked with dainty shell and seaweed. What are the hosts of the enemy to Him? He did blow with His wind, and His sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

O God! Thou art my God, the God of my mercy, Who goeth before me. The old sins that once held me in bondage may still pursue, but Thou art my Refuge and Strength. New temptations may wait for my coming, but if my God goeth before me, He will have grace waiting for me and strength according to my need. Ever quicker than the arrow of our foe is the shield of our Defender. 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you,'—yonder he waits, lurking in the way,—'that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that

thy faith fail not.' Forth against my foes, the God of my mercy goeth before me.

The God of my mercy goeth before me: then He will know my temporal wants. Look at Israel again. Here they come—so many hundred thousand, besides the children. And about them a desert! Surely they are brought up here to die. The fierce sun will beat upon them by day; wild beasts and robber bands will come to prey upon them by night. And what can they eat? Here is no bread; corn won't grow in this sandy waste and on these barren But the God of their mercy goeth before them. Here by day the pillar of cloud throws upon them all its kindly shade: the sun cannot smite And when darkness comes, the fire burns with ruddy glow, their comfort and their safety: they need not fear the terror by night. At break of day the manna waits for them, fresh, sweet, delicious; and they gather from the desert 'bread enough and to spare.' What then though my path leads through the wilderness? The God of my mercy, He goeth before me, and He will provide.

A little lad during the American war was his widowed mother's comfort and joy. One day, as the poor woman was trying to scrape the flour from the sides and bottom of the barrel, to help out the day's supply, the lad cried, 'Mother, we shall have some more very soon now, I know.'

'Why do you say so, my boy?' asked the mother.

'Why, because you've got to scraping the barrel. I believe God always hears you scraping the barrel, and that's a sign to Him that you want another.'

And before the day was over the fresh supply had

come. We may have come to the bottom of the barrel. Then look up for more. Brother, have a 'tremendous faith' in the providence—the providing—of our God.

That was a sweet voice from the empty barrel; but not sweeter than a score of voices all about us, if we had but ears and hearts to hear them. There you sit, mournful and desponding, wondering what you will do if this should happen or that. Listen, for the crust on the table is preaching a sermon; 'Look at me,' it says; 'do you know where I come from? Why, hundreds and thousands of years ago, your Heavenly Father provided for your supply this morning. He put the corn in man's hands; year after year, for six thousand years, He has given the sunshine and shower to pass me on for you to-day; and here at last I am come from His hand to feed and strengthen you. O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?'

Then up leaps a little flame from the fire. 'Cheer up,' it says, 'cheer up. Thousands of years ago, your Father saw that you would need my little bit of warmth this morning, and need to be comforted with my ruddy blaze. And He stored me for your use,—made me ready and kept me waiting until now; and here I am at last; His gift, to make you glad with my heat, and to cheer you with my dancing flame.'

One of the earliest Arctic explorers, the discoverer of Iceland, is said to have carried with him a number of ravens; and when he wanted to know where the land lay, he would loose one of the birds, and then follow the direction of its flight. A right

good use for our croaking cares; let them fly away to the Lord; and let us follow them, until we rest in Him.

So let us go forth with a song of triumph exulting in our God.

'Awake, our souls! away, our fears!
Let every trembling thought be gone!
Awake, and run the heavenly race,
And put a cheerful courage on.

'O mighty God! Thy matchless Power Is ever new, and ever young; And firm endures, while endless years Their everlasting circles run.'

II.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?'—MATT. vii. II.

SOMETIMES there is need for us to take the word, and to thrash, and grind, and bake, before we can rightly feed upon it. Meditation must work to get its sweetness and strength. But here the table is spread; the feast is waiting. The Master stands with gracious bidding, 'Come and dine.' Here the clusters hang down so low that a little child can reach the full ripe fruit.

I. See how the Lord Jesus would have us think of God: 'Your Father which is in Heaven.' That, and yet more than that, infinitely more. There is a dark background here which makes the true Fatherliness of God stand out with a fulness of meaning: Ye being evil. And yet it is our Father Who is in Heaven. We never can know, never can in any way think, how far this is above everything we should have dared to say, had not the Lord Jesus come to teach us. Before ever the beauties of Paradise had begun to fade, before ever the curse was spoken, whilst yet the touch of that Hand lingered upon all things and kept them fresh and beautiful, the thought

of God had become a terror to the man. Crouching away in the deep shadows of the tree, trembling from head to foot, in Eden itself man heard the voice of the Lord God, and was afraid and hid him-Outside the gates of Paradise, toiling over fields that had lost the fairest tokens of the Father's love, no wonder that man sought to get further still The people to whom He had showed a from God. marvellous great kindness, who had seen Presence. His Power, His Deliverance, His bountiful Provision, as no others had seen it, fled from the glory of His coming in terror, crying, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die.' 'No man hath seen God at any time; the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.'

Here Iesus gathers the disciples about Him to reveal the name and mystery of God. He does not speak of thunder, of darkness, of awful majesty. He might have made that Mount a place of Transfiguration, where Heaven opened and there was heard the Voice of the Almighty. But how different Sitting down upon the grass, on is it all from that. the quiet mountain-height, arched over with that deep-blue sky, with the wild flowers at their feet; the hill sloping down to the fishing villages, and to the waters of the lake dotted here and there with the busy boats. About them the wild birds sing: our own familiar birds gladdened and taught the little company—the throbbing music of the lark filled all the heaven; the thrush and black-bird sounded their rich notes, and now and then there came the hoarse croak of the raven from the rocky height. Jesus bent and picked a flower of the field. Of the

field; much is in that. A wild flower. Not a dainty hot-house rarity, set in a palace and tended with hourly care. The 'flower of the field,' that trembled in cold winds and was nipped by frosty nights, and that might be trampled under foot or plucked by any passer-by and lightly flung away. 'Look at it,' said the gracious 'Pure, fragrant, beautiful, it teaches Master. you of God; it toils not, nor spins, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like this. Where does this beauty come from, and this frail life? What Power formed it? Whose Tenderness protects it? Here learn of your Heavenly Father. For you He has much more tenderness, and power, and gracious care, and bountiful provision? Shall he not much more clothe you?' This then is God; so near to men; so kind and watchful over us; so constant in His care and blessing. The Heavenly Father clothing His children.

Again the Blessed Master bids His disciples listen to the birds, the chirping sparrow or the croaking raven. These do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; but 'your Heavenly Father feedeth them.' For you, His children, how much more love and blessing! Shall He not much more feed you?

Then there is another step. Perhaps only one more is possible. Jesus bids us look within ourselves at what is best and purest in our human nature—the love of father and mother to their children. More than anything else can do, this love lifts us up into a knowledge of God;—patient, pitiful, self-sacrificing, making the children's griefs a hundredfold its own, making their needs the chief

thought of the daily life, finding strength and joy in their well-being. Here we are to learn of God. He is 'your Heavenly Father'—pitiful, watchful, seeking ever to help and to bless us.

It is worth while to stay a moment to look at these three preachers of righteousness. A bird, in suit of black and brown, with monotonous chirp or rapturous music; or a raven dressed all in sombre black, with only a croak. These, and every bird that flies, are the Lord's duly appointed preachers. Here, surely, is a bit of comfort for the lowly and hidden one, thinking himself without any power to do any good. A chirping sparrow preached, and his sermon has blessed ten thousand thousand souls. So it always is and shall be—a life of contentment, and cheerful trust, and grateful love, is a true ministry. Somebody shall get from it the blessed teaching: Your Heavenly Father careth for you.

A Flower—mere buttercup or daisy. Such a common thing. And in 'the field,' too—what good can it do in the big, noisy, bustling world? The great sun, the tumbling seas, the muttering thunder, the dreadful earthquake, these might tell of Him—majestic, terrible. But a flower! Ah, it preached a sermon that these great forces could not preach. Being little, and common, and weak, it stood up that day and whispered: 'See, He hath fashioned me in all this beauty. He hath swathed me about with these protecting leaves, and taught me to bend in the storms. He sends me dew to drink, and sunshine. His hand hath decked me with these hues, and covered me with gold. "Shall He not much more clothe you?"' And so it is still and ever shall be.

The quiet, simple, common souls are ordained for this ministry. A life of sweet contentment and of fragrant love shall carry its message to some heart, and shall have seals to its ministry. 'Fear not,' it sings, 'your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'

And then a child, too! ignorant, helpless, yet all untroubled; happy in the love that watches over it. Ah, what sermons are preached from such a life! To be simple, and true; to be free from suspicion and the calculating ways of stony men; to be generous; and to step out untroubled as to all that mysterious future—such a life is the highest, truest ministry for God. Give thanks that His service is one in which the lowliest can do the sublimest work, and teach the loftiest lessons. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hath He perfected praise.

It is strange to think of these little ones as earth's philosophers and teachers, revealing to us the profoundest truths of the Deity. We see more readily how they redeem us from the selfishness of earth; and how they keep alive amidst unlovely things the heavenly virtues of gentleness and purity and trust. But that they should reveal God to us! No wonder that Jesus set a little child in the midst of the disciples to teach them who is the greatest.

I have heard somewhere of a little girl who asked her mother why the flowers died when they were cut and brought into the house. The mother answered lightly, 'Oh! because they have no sunshine there.' 'Poor things!' sighed the little maiden, sadly. 'Poor things! I'm sorry for them.' And presently the mother found the little one standing on a chair,

stretching up her tiny arms, and holding a cup to the sun. 'What are you doing?' asked the mother, wondering. 'Getting some sunshine for the poor flowers,' said the child.

That pleasant fancy of the little maiden's is a blessed fact for us. Life is a gloomy thing with us men and women, full of regrets and fears. 'We look before and after, and pine for what is not.' We do not catch the sunshine, and for want of it we droop and die. But God sends His little ones to bring it to us; pure, life-giving light from Heaven—a wondrous light, in which we learn the great love and tenderness of our Father, God.

II. If God is our Father, what then? We believe all this, of course. We accept it without a moment's doubt. There is One, the Creator of all things, seeing all things, knowing all things, compelling all things to serve Him. He watches me as His child. He has redeemed me unto Himself by the death of His only-begotten Son. He is seeking ever to lead me on to the fullest, highest, truest good. Of course, we all believe this.

Do we? Then where is the childlike life? My little child does not go wondering where dinner will come from as soon as breakfast is over. My child never troubles about next winter and what it shall do for home and warmth. My child does not go worrying itself as to whether I love it and care for it. But you, poor doubting child of God, are perplexed with a thousand anxieties. You fret. You fear. You lie awake at night and go burdened through the day, wondering whatever you will do.

'Well, but that is so different.' Yes; it is. Very different. Your Father can't fail you. Your Father is Almighty, and All-wise, and All-good. It is very different. For if I, being evil, know how to give good things to my child, 'how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?'

Picture to yourself a group of our children gathered wondering about a crying lad of six. Poor little fellow! he can't sleep at night, for he keeps asking how he will do in six months' time. He goes on his way fretting and worrying about a score of things. These little ones, and all God's other angels, stare at him.

'Haven't you got any father?' asks one of them, very tenderly.

Yes, he has got a father.

'Perhaps his father is not kind to him,' whispers another.

Yes; his father is the kindest.

'Perhaps, then, his father is gone away and does not know about him,' says a third.

No; his father never goes away, and knows all about him.

Then says a little maiden tenderly, 'Perhaps his father is poor, and can't give him anything.'

No; his father owns a vast estate, and his very servants have enough and to spare.

These little ones are puzzled by so strange a sight. But here is a vastly greater wonder—a fretting, fearing, anxious child of God!

Milton sings of the earth as bound to Heaven by golden chains. What if there came the tidings that Heaven, wearied of the rebel world, had loosed the chains and flung it off? All are orphans. None have any longer the love and care of the Heavenly Father. What difference would it make to very many? Ah, to some it would be more than if the sun went out and left the heavens a great black Death, with all his ghastliest hollow over us. terrors, could bring nothing so lonely as this would be. But many a man would just go to his business not a bit more burdened than he was before. Many a woman would find that the day just brought its old weight of care, and nothing more. No; with hundreds of us faith in Providence is chiefly a notion, not a life. A creed that we believe it right to believe in; not a great fact—the great fact, in the strength of which we go out to live the untroubled, happy life of children. Yet your Heavenly Father careth for you.

We do not give ourselves over with an absolute confidence to our Heavenly Father, letting Him have His own way with us. We form our notion of what is good, and then cry out for everything that fits in with that notion. But we should never let our children deal in this way with us. Ye know how to give good gifts unto your children. You never dream of giving the child everything it asks for. If a son ask bread, or a fish, or an egg—well, it may not do to indulge even these requests always, but you don't mock him with a stone or harm him with a serpent. You know how to give good gifts.

This silly little fellow is crying because he cannot have the knife to play with, or the fire—pouting, and grumbling, and thinking his father dreadfully unkind.

This child of God is doubting and murmuring be-

cause of some business loss, or at some forfeited pleasure, or over some disappointment. Which is the foolish child? You think your Father does not know how to give good things. Money-making. comforts, luxuries, honours—these are good things. Are they—always, and for everybody? Have you not known men who so long as they had to work hard and earned the week's wages were good, honest, godly men whom it was a pleasure to shake by the But there came a tide of prosperity and it swept them away: no good henceforth to God or Out of the fire of these luxuries crept not one deadly serpent only but a dozen, and fastened upon them—pride, self-indulgence, avarice, cunning. You think you could manage all this 'good.' We children But the Heavenly Father knows us too always do. well, and loves us too much to give us our own way. What folly, what wickedness, what peril it is for us to go crying out against the perfect wisdom and love of His dealings with us!

Here comes the little school-boy sullen and angry. He wants a holiday all the week—lessons are so hard; and the master is so strict; and some of the boys are so rough and unkind. You laugh at him good-humouredly: 'Come, Sir—away with you. You don't know what is good for yourself. One of these days you will be thankful that your father knew better than you did.'

But here is a murmuring child of God: 'It really is enough to try any one's patience—this worry, and that trouble; this is so annoying, and that is so difficult. Why does the Heavenly Father let me be tried like this?'

Ah, it is you that do not want to go to school. You do not want to learn patience and endurance and trust. To us foolish children these are not the 'good things.' To have our own way, to do as we like, to be comfortable and prosperous; these are the good things. Oh! let us be thankful, daily and devoutly thankful, that He knows so much better than we do, and is so much kinder. One day, when we come to our manhood, we shall bless Him that He did not let us have our way. The good thing, the only good thing for us, is not what we think best, nor what the world calls good; it is just that which He sends us.

We men and women used to think that the good things of life were holidays and 'treats.' We are thankful now for the lessons and the discipline that fitted us for manhood. And so the Heavenly Father sees the further manhood, the high life and service, which may be ours when we come of full age, and enter into the Father's House, to take our place as full-grown sons.

He sees the lessons we need to learn; the discipline and developing that we require. If we will but let Him, He shall give us these good things. Let your mind go out after these kingly possessions, coveting earnestly these best gifts; Faith, that makes conquerors, and Godlike Love; Truth; Courage, and Endurance, and Patience, and Hope, and Joy. These are the good things with which the Heavenly Father seeks to enrich us. For these He shapes the plan of our lives, and sends us forth into the teaching of every day. Let the prayer and effort be that He may have His own way with us perfectly.

III. Let us stir ourselves to trust our Heavenly Father by all the force of this 'much more'.

Ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. Earth has no power to measure human love. What is there that it will not endure or dare? What is there that it grudges to bestow? But for ever there stretches the love of God, soaring infinitely higher, sinking infinitely deeper. It is the height and depth, the length and breadth of this 'much more.'

What a token and pledge of love has our Heavenly Father given to us all in Him Who spake these very words! To us, 'being evil,' the Father has given His only-begotten Son. Here is all fulness. When the soul is sick, and the heart is faint; when the burden of life presses heavily, and the dealings of God are mysterious to us; when the enemy is busy, and the swarms of doubt come about us; then get away under the shadow of the Cross. Dwell upon it all. That Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the utterance of God's love to you. What can unsay it?

When pain gnaws, when grief bewilders, when it seems as if all were against us, then lift up the eyes unto that Holy Hill whence cometh help. There God Himself stoops down to tell us of His love. Unasked, He gave us 'being evil' that unspeakable Gift. He reaches out the strong right hand of His great love to help us. Can anything but good come forth from Him? There is the everlasting assurance that He will only bless us. Look up from the Cross of Christ to ask triumphantly: 'How much more shall our Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him!'

And entering into the presence of the Eternal Father by that way of the Cross, we can turn that 'much more' over and over, finding in it ever new meaning and a richer promise.

Much more, because of His power. Earth has no more pitiable sight than tender, yearning, but helpless love. Jairus holds his little daughter in those strong arms of his, the flushed face leaning on his shoulders, and down his cheeks the tears keep forcing their way; for he feels that the precious life is slipping from his hold, and he is all powerless to keep it. So true that heart of his, so eager all his soul to help her. Alas, the misery of this helplessness! But look up. 'There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, Who rideth upon the Heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy Refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.' How much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him!'

Much more, because He sees the good things. Our ignorance blinds our love. Poor Hagar sits parched and faint; about her only desert sand, and above a sky of brass and the fierce sun. At her feet the empty bottle lies, and yonder in the scanty shade of the shrub the little lad is moaning away his life, whilst the mother sits with buried face, heart-broken, muttering only, 'Let me not see the death of the child.' O cruel ignorance! Close beside her all the time is the hidden well, cool and clear within its leafy shade. God opened her eyes and showed her a well of water. In a moment the grief was gone. Ishmael lived again. And she called the name of the place, 'Thou God seest me.' If ye, being evil,

know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to us! He sees the hidden good.

Much more, because He knows our need. Away in the far country the prodigal sits perishing with hunger, saying within himself: 'How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare?' At home the father moves about amongst the servants, thinking ever of the son. 'Where is he now, and what is he doing?' And fondly recalling all the promise of the early years, he pictures him, perhaps the prosperous merchant of some great city, who shall come back some day to startle them with all his wealth and grandeur. Ah! did the father but know that the son is yonder, friendless, ragged, sent into the fields to feed swine, how would he have called the servants and bid them go forth with him into the far country! 'Bring bread and meat, bring shoes and robes, for yonder he is perishing, with no man to give unto him.' 'Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' seeth in secret. He knows the hidden want. much more shall He give good things to His children?

And then once more comes in that contrast. If ye, being evil. Here is no fickle temper; no hurried overlooking. Here is no weakness lavishing to-day, and to-morrow as unwisely severe. Here is no weariness of giving; no grudging of His gifts; no mistaken kindness. We may come with boldness and make known our request. Here is the calm, deep ocean of unruffled love, from which we may draw the supply

of all our need. Do not let us hear of it only, or only believe it. Let us dwell upon it, and enter into it and claim it as our own. This is the 'manner of love' which 'the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.'

You fear to call yourself by such a high and glorious name? Note then the tenderness of the Saviour's words, as if He knew the fear, and thus met it and silenced it for ever: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to '—not His children—but to those outside and beyond these who would dare to come so near—'to them that ask Him.' So are all the 'good things' of our God made over to us every one for the simple asking.

III.

THE HOMELINESS OF JESUS.

'The Son of Man came eating and drinking.'—MATT. xi. 19.

THIS is what the Lord Jesus said of Himself. It was a strange thing to say. The words and the fact perplexed His followers, and were misunderstood by others. Turn, for instance, to the ninth chapter and read from the tenth to the fifteenth verses. And, of course, His enemies found in them an opportunity of vile abuse: 'Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.'

A Friend of Publicans and Sinners. For good or harm, few things are more powerful than a name. A good epithet has determined the fate of many a great effort. The craft of Satan could not have chosen one more likely to do its work than this. Even in this great nineteenth century of Christian light, and in this Christian land of ours, what is the worst thing we can say of any man? That he does not pay his debts? or that he is uncharitable, profane, godless, false, covetous, lewd? No; a man may be all that, and yet he shall not lose caste. But to be a friend and associate of 'common people'—to belong to them by birth, or business, or upbringing—is un-

pardonable. The world can do with religion if religion is rich and respectable. 'The worldly religion' can do with badness, if badness is well-bred and gentlemanly. 'A Friend of Publicans and Sinners!' At that the Pharisee starts back, lest his spotless robes should be defiled. He flings up his white bejewelled hands in horror; his lip curls into a sneer; and he turns away in haughty contempt.

In the Life of Tyndale there is a story told with charming simplicity. When he was living as tutor with Sir John and Lady Walsh, he sat once with the guests that partook of Sir John's hospitality, wealthy abbots and other great ecclesiastics, and he chanced to have some discussion in which he held his own with a gentleness and ease that sorely provoked them; whereupon my Lady Walsh took him aside and rated him soundly: 'What! did ye not know that there was such an one who spendeth two hundred pounds by the year; and such another spendeth an hundred, and such another three hundred? What think ye then? Were it reason that we should believe you [a poor tutor with but a few shillings a year!] before such great and rich men?'

This was the great offence. The Lord Jesus was a Galilean; not one of their own exclusive selves. He was a Nazarene: a lowly and obscure villager. He was an associate of common people: 'a Friend of publicans and sinners.'

A Friend of Publicans and Sinners! So they gave to the King of kings and Lord of lords one of His most glorious titles: a crown of thorns that cruel hands had wreathed and thrust upon Him in

derision; but His love touched it, and it shone. His brightest, fairest, dearest Name is this: the Friend of Sinners. So He maketh the wrath of men to praise Him. As away on the Western coast I have seen the mists of earth creep up to hide and dim the glory of the sun; low-lying banks of cloud, long lines of clouds, light curling dappled clouds, all trooping forth as if to darken and blot out his splendour. And noiselessly the King of Day put forth his might, and arrayed them all in scarlet, and crowned them all with gold, and made each cloud stand round about and minister to his magnificence, like lords-in-waiting round about a king.

The Lord declares this to be the way of His coming: eating and drinking. The contrast is between the Son of Man and the Baptist, who came 'neither eating nor drinking.' Throughout the land there had gone rumours of one who had appeared suddenly in the desert. All the people went forth to see and to hear him. They found a man in whom one of the old prophets seemed to live again; with long hair and beard, the rough dress of camel'shair girt with a leathern girdle—a man rugged, severe, unfearing, with stern words echoing amidst the rocks. Holding in contempt all the attractions of social life, he dwelt in some cave, drank only of the brook, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Back came many mocking: 'He neither eateth nor drinketh-he hath a devil.'

But the Son of Man comes 'eating and drinking.' No contrast could be greater. We pass away from stony waste and desert plain, and reach the little

village of Cana, its houses almost hidden in the thick growth of leafy trees. The air is sweet with the breath of the flowers, and glad with happy songs and the merry-making of the children. In one of the houses a little company meet to share the pleasures of a wedding-day, and amongst the guests Iesus and His disciples have been bidden. Blessed Master comes, bringing with Him no gloom to check their mirth. He does not hold Himself aloof with a silence that makes men suspect His condemnation, nor does He stoop from His solitary height, betraying His conscious superiority in every look and word. We see Him moving amongst them with the simplicity that made them all at home with Him; with that truest social grace which unconsciously made their interests His own, and with the brotherly kindness which is ready to minister to their pleasure. There is all that makes it easy and natural for His mother to come to Him with the complaint: 'They have no wine.' The waterpots are filled 'up to the brim,' for He 'giveth liberally.' And at the Creator's word the needed wine is set before the governor of the feast. 'The best wine kept till now,' saith he, tasting it and marvelling at its deliciousness. Ah! that Hand can only give Then saith the Evangelist, Jesus the very best. 'manifested forth His glory'—this amongst other glories, the glory of the Brother-man, at home with all men everywhere, Who came eating and drinking. So His life was spent-in the midst of men and freely mingling with them. The delights of the Son of Man are with the sons of men. This was

how He came. There were sad, solitary hours, and

even days, such as those of which St. Mark tells so vividly and so plaintively: 'He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts.' But this rather breaks in upon His life-plan than belongs to it. If we recall that Life of Blessing, it is to see Him going in to eat bread at the house of the Pharisee, with such a simple kindliness that an outcast woman can fall at His feet even there, and sink broken-hearted in her grief and penitence, to rise up having found a new heart and a new life, fresh, pure, and loving, like the heart of a little child. We think of Him going home with Zacchæus, the kindly notice transforming the publican into another man. We see Him going down sorrowful to Bethany to be the light of the darkened home, and the solace of the desolate sisters. If we follow Him into the wilderness, it is only to see Him amidst the hungry thousands, blessing and breaking the bread for them, nor letting His bounty rest until 'they did all eat, and were filled.' And then-a wonderfully beautiful completion of the Life-work-on the last evening the last meal reaches back and joins itself with that 'beginning of miracles,' uplifting all the sociality of that life into a heavenly sanctity. He takes into His hand the bread and wine, the simplest elements of our social communion, and makes them the perpetual symbols of His life as well as of His death. In this breaking of bread, and in this sacred lovingcup, His people are henceforth to recall their Lord —the Brother-man Who comes still into the midst of men, at home with them, as well as the Saviour Who in infinite compassion gave His Body to be

broken, and His blood to be shed, 'for us men and for our salvation.'

And after the Resurrection the eyes of the disciples were holden until 'He sat at meat with them'; then 'He was known of them in breaking of bread.' in that last scene on the last page of the Gospelsstanding there, as we look back upon that Life, in the very foreground—is that beautiful incident of the Lord's tenderness. The disciples have been fishing all night, and have caught nothing; they are cold, hungry, disheartened. With the daybreak. Jesus comes. At once He fills the net with plenty. He lights the fire of coals: has the bread and broiled fish waiting for them, and stands on the shore with His loving invitation, 'Come and dine.' So He was to the end, so He is still—the Homely, Brotherly Jesus, interested in the common business of our lives; sitting amongst us at the daily meal which His own bounty provides, and which His own Presence cheers and gladdens.

Do not let us think of this Homeliness as only just one feature of that all-perfect Life. This was how He came. It meets us everywhere. It runs through everything.

See this purpose in the circumstances of His Birth. It is the birth in the stable and the being laid in a manger that made it possible for the shepherds to come straight from their flocks to find 'the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' If He had been born in a palace they could have gained no entrance, and must have gone back saying, 'He is come—the King; but only the great, the rich, the mighty of the earth

can see Him.' Had He come like John the Baptist, or even in the house at Nazareth, friends would have kept the young Child from intrusion and disturbance at such an hour, when quietness and rest were needful alike for the holy Babe and His mother. But in that stable there was probably no door to keep them out, much less bolt or bar. There was no attendant to whisper a forbidding word. Here was the Brother of the Poorest, the Gift of God's love to the whole world, to Whom whosoever will may come.

So, again, in His coming as a Public Teacher. Was there ever any other great Leader and Teacher of men who went forth directly from the midst of the lowliest of the people whom he came to warn and to save? Moses must go away into the wilderness for forty years to get the awe and mystery of the unknown; before that his words and efforts are angrily The Prophets came, like Elijah, men resented. knew not whence, and went, they knew not whither. They spoke with the authority of those over whose movements hung a mystery that lifted them above common men and set them higher and apart. John the Baptist is 'in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel.' Then he comes suddenly startling men as a voice; a stern summons to repent sounding up from the depths of the desert and going over all the land. But the Son of Man came eating and drinking—in the midst of the people and at home with them. He was more than a Prophet: He was the Brother of men, the Friend of sinners. As He comes the villagers know all about Him. 'Is not this the Carpenter? And are not His brothers with us? and His sisters?' So all men

were at home with Him. The Blessed Lord Jesus never seemed to be a stranger to any man. The gift of familiarity was there, perfectly, with all other good and perfect gifts. Little children would not have stretched out eager hands towards Elias, or the Baptist. Would the trembling leper or the outcast woman have crept to their side and knelt imploring that they might be blessed? But wherever Jesus went the people felt the welcome of that great Brotherliness. It filled all that 'human Face Divine'; it rang in every word; it directed the whole life.

Look at this, again, in the choice of His disciples. How often and how deeply Jesus must have longed for intellectual companionship and for intelligent sympathy! He who amazed the doctors in the temple when but twelve years of age, moves in His manhood with simple fishermen and lowly peasants. Three times Heaven appeared ministering to the Son of Man. May it not have been on each occasion that only by such relief and help could that human life have been sustained? Once it was to relieve the bodily exhaustion, when faint and famished in the wilderness. Once when the anguish and bitter grief of His soul bowed Him down in exceeding sorrow, and the over-full heart might have broken, but for that an angel appeared, 'strengthening Him.' The third time was when the great and terrible thoughts of Calvary pressed upon Him, and without some utterance of them the mind must have been crushed beneath the weight. Then there appeared Moses and Elias, talking with Him of the decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem. Why then did Jesus choose to have with Him those who misunderstood and hindered Him? One of them, once at least, in noisy ignorance even 'began to rebuke Him'! Was it not that the simple and poor and ignorant might see His welcome, and come with boldness into His Presence and listen to His words without any thought of intrusion? Grave, learned, reverend Rabbis would have stirred curiosity, but would have repelled the poor and unlettered. But these men, with broad Galilean brogue and weather-beaten faces and simple ways and peasants' dress—anybody could come and sit down with them. Every villager felt welcome when they could call Him Master.

So in the teachings of our Lord. 'The common people heard Him gladly.' It is strange to think that there once stood up in the midst of men, with all their curious pryings and dark guesses and ignorant teachings, One Who knew all things, Who could have 'cut atwain the knots that tangle human creeds,' Who could have kept every age wondering by predictions of its peoples and its inventions and achievements. Why did He not leave some such satisfying evidence of His claims? Because the world would only have wondered occasionally at this Magician, Seer, or God; because the world then would have missed and mourned the loving Brother of all time. And so He stood and entreated: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' He told simple yet exquisite

stories that little children listened to, and the poorest could understand; and so men learned that in Him was hope for the vilest, and love for the most fallen, and salvation for them that were furthest off.

And so in His miracles. Jesus might have wrought miracles the evidence of which should have lasted long after the blind man had ceased to tell of the Hand that touched him, and how Heaven's light flashed upon him instantly. The deaf, the leprous and the possessed who were healed, soon passed away. He might have done wonders, the proof of which should be as manifest to us as to those who saw them doné. But Power would have only amazed men: He sought to win them. And so He came with love that cared for their wants and sorrows; pity that bent down over their sufferings and healed them, and which drew men's hearts in loving gratitude and sure trust to Him. what He sought. This is what He seeketh still.

For this same Son of Man is our Saviour, and the King of Heaven. The words go on and meet us again, purged of all earthliness, and glorified: 'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.' Then shall all the meaning of the words begin to be revealed to us: 'This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.' Them shall we know all the tender Brotherliness, all the sweet Homeliness of the Son of Man, Who 'came eating and drinking.'

Is not this the Real and Living Saviour that we

need? There are many forms of goodness that do not make us good. There is no helpful brotherly hand in them, lifting us up.

There is the dreadful holiness that meets us with its thunders and lightnings on Sinai, terrifying us. We shrink from it confounded and overwhelmed, ready to cry with Israel: 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die!'

There is the goodness of grand, heroic natures, up to which we look, sighing that we should be so little and so weak and so unlike them. We admire, and almost envy, but yet excuse ourselves. We have no such splendid gifts, and must be content to do the best we can in our little way.

Then there is another form of goodness, more provoking than helpful—the sentimental: more common in biographies and on tombstones than in the living epistles that are 'known and read of all men.' The goodness that does not come 'eating and drinking'; that has no flesh and blood. The goodness with a perpetual smile, that floats along ignorant of common wants and common cares and all the swarm of buzzing anxieties. A sickly goodness that can't go tramping bravely along life's miry ways and stony roads; that would be blown away in its winds; washed away in the wintry rains which most of us must face. So we turn from it too, with a sense of unreality.

And yet more common everywhere is another variety of goodness: The goodness that scolds us—the rigorous fault-finding goodness that makes us always feel how bad we are, but that never puts us into the way of being better—never coming down

alongside of us with kindly hand, and helping us gently. It can only make us sigh despairingly over ourselves, and it takes away the very effort to be better. What we want is a very real goodness, that perfectly fulfils all that we demand in our ideal, and much more; and yet it must not discourage us. So unlike what we are; and yet able to put heart and hope into us, and helping us. Will you ask yourself, How can it come? Press home the question upon the thoughts until there is some kind of an answer. Do we not feel that it must meet us, first. as a Living Presence? We want more than true words and noble precepts. Then it must come subject to the same conditions as ourselves-understanding all the common wants and difficulties of our every-day life. And it must be at home with us, with a quiet, loving friendliness—understanding us; knowing the worst of us, and yet loving us; knowing all the failure and folly, and yet willing to help.

And what is all this but the very need which our Lord so blessedly satisfies? The Son of Man came eating and drinking: elevating, ennobling, strengthening, transforming by His Presence and tender Brotherliness.

IV.

DEPRESSION: A TALK FOR A DULL DAY.

TE will find a text in the Book of Psalms—that is the Book of spiritual experience. History and prophecy are in it, but they serve chiefly to illustrate some phase of the inner life—some conflict, some deliverance: the soul's sorrow, or fear, or In this lies its never-failing freshness. triumph. is as old as the Church; it will be as long-lived—the hymn of the Christian as much as the chant of the Jew, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. It is the music all along the river of life: the song with which it first comes leaping into the light; the changeful melody of its broken course, now loitering, now rushing swift and passionate; the music of its brawling in the shallow places; the troubled music of its fall; then the grateful singing as it comes forth again from gloom into the sunshine; at last the rapture, deep and full, with which it flows out into the ocean, whither all life is tending. This is the Heart-book, and so it is the Hymn-book of the ages. Here then we should expect to find this phase of our religious life-Depres-This is not passed by: He telleth the stars, so great is HE; but, thank God! that is not all: He healeth the broken in heart.

So on this dull day, when the east wind sweeps

drearily, and life itself is somewhat of a burden, let us turn to the last verse of the forty-second Psalm: 'WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O MY SOUL?'

Well, come—here is a bit of good cheer at the very outset: You are not alone. This dull feeling of loneliness and wearied heaviness is apt to drive the thought in upon one's self; you are perhaps tempted to think murmuringly, that nobody else has gone along this dreary way. Look, here are footmarks. More than that, here is a path. Many have been where you are. And look again, it is a pathway that leads up to the Celestial City. These footprints were left by those who were met here by His Light and Truth; God's white-handed angels, who came forth to lead them, and brought them unto His holy hill. (Psalm xliii.) So here is company. Let this comfort—and that in its old full meaning, co-fort strengthen by friendly presence.

But this depression is a querulous thing. no appetite for the food that would do it good. It thrusts aside the cordial that would cheer and gladden. 'Poor consolation this,' it mutters, 'that others should be made of such poor stuff as I am, cowardly and weak, for whom religion could do no more than that!'

But look a little more closely at the company. Note well who they are, and what they have been. He is no coward who sits here with harp in hand, pouring out his soul in these troubled, plaintive notes. A hero, indeed, brave as any of whom the legends tell. When but a lad, he slew the lion and the bear. When only a stripling, he went out against the great Goliath, before whom the host of Israel had fled. A man this who loved peril. Think of him stealing in amongst the sleeping soldiers, and taking the spear and cruse of water from beside the pillow of the cruel king, who had set a price upon his head! He it is who sits down here, all sad at heart: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?

Look again at another who comes along this way. You dare not write him down as made of poor stuff—this man of stalwart form, with the long hair falling on his shoulders, and his loose mantle flung around him. He who faced the bad Ahab, and rang out the curse in his ears; he who stood and challenged the hundreds of Baal's priests; he who feared none but God: no coward was Elijah. Yet here he sits in the wilderness of depression, weeping weak tears, and moaning about the uselessness of his work, and praying in his languid weariness that he might die.

But you object to this too: 'You fetch this honey from a lion's carcass. You bid me find comfort in great men overtaken by failure, unbelief, sin.'

Failure! Unbelief! Sin! Who says so? David does not. Elijah does not. And you, depressed one, will not dare to say so if you look again. See here on this chill night, as bleak winds blow among the trees, there kneels One borne down with His great burden of grief. Craving for sympathy, He comes to His sleeping companions and appeals to them: Could ye not watch with Me one hour? And again He bends under the black shadows; over Him there comes the horror of a great darkness—My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Turn again to the words of this psalm. They are not David's only.

Take them to Gethsemane; they tell of its sorrows. Read them in the gloom of Calvary; the cry of its agony is in them: My soul thirsteth for God.... My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? I will say unto God my Rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?

Do not refuse to be comforted. Depression is not peculiar to you. Nor is it a besetment only of weak ones and cowards. Nor is it in itself sin, or unbelief, or failure. The Holy Lord Himself hath passed this way.

Let us look at some causes of this depression. know the cause of it goes a long way towards finding the cure. Not unfrequently the cause is physical. Ill-health and bad weather have much to answer for. Melancholy: black bile. Many a poor soul would get rid of despair if he did but believe that this lack of energy and general weariness, almost indifference perhaps, came from the east wind, or a disordered Shrewd Samuel Bradburn, rubbing his stomach. hands at the sight of a fine clear frosty morning, said: 'This will brighten many evidences.' Robertson traces Elijah's depression to these two sources amongst others:

'II. Want of occupation.—As long as Elijah had a prophet's

^{&#}x27;I. Relaxation of physical strength.—On the reception of Jezebel's message, Elijah flies for his life-toils on the whole day-sits down under a juniper-tree, faint, hungry and travelworn: the gale of an Oriental evening, damp and heavy with languid sweetness, breathing on his face. The prophet and the man give way. He longs to die: you cannot mistake the presence of causes in part purely physical.

work to do, severe as that work was, all went on healthily: but his occupation was gone. To-morrow and the day after what has he left to do?.... Those who have felt the hours hang so heavy can comprehend part of Elijah's sadness.'

And so in the case of John the Baptist and his doubts in the dungeon; it is the gloomy depression of a man used to hardy life and fresh air, shut up now in the close prison. Not that these are the only, not even the chief sources of the depression in either case, but they are there and should be recognized. And very often depression begins and ends in physical causes, and nothing else. There are numbers of God's children who fear that they have lost all the consolations of religion, when all they want is a prescription from some wise doctor. Many a pilgrim is writing himself down for lost, when all that is needful is a week's change of air and scene and exercise. Don't think of these causes of depression as light and trivial. Don't think that little things like these can have no religious side; that our Heavenly Father can have nothing to do with them, and that such matters have nothing to do with our discipline. It is a miserable mistake, almost a sin, to talk so. These little things are as much permitted of our Heavenly Father as if they were wrought by angels sent on purpose to accomplish them. In the history of Jonah we are told that it was the Lord Who prepared the gourd and the worm and the vehement east wind—the same Lord Who said: 'Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city.' And the purpose and discipline of depression is just as important when it springs from such commonplace sources as when it comes from greater things. So let another ray of

cheerful sunlight come across your path. Our loving Father teaches us that these little things are not beneath His notice. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. Don't let us stop there. Go on to the why and wherefore of it. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust. Come, child of God, cast down, faint, restless, sad, here are the Father's arms opened in pity: here is His loving care coming to watch and comfort you. This is not too little a matter for His love: quicker, deeper, tenderer than any mother's to her sick child. David's consolation includes this too: 'I shall vet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'

But further,—See to it honestly that this depression does not come from sin, or from neglect. Here you are going on your way glad in the favour of God. Your soul exults in Him. Prayer is a coming right into His presence and a confident claiming in the name of the Well-Beloved. You know what it is sometimes to go soaring up into the bright blue overhead, right up to heaven's gate, with a song as sweet and rapturous as the lark's. God's love glows in your heart: His word is like the wood to which Jonathan came, and, behold, the honey dropped. But, alas! then comes à change. Dulness creeps over you. The sky is overcast. The soul can't soar. Its song is hushed. God seems afar off. There is a restraint in prayer. There is a veil over the Word. The light is faded; the joy dead. Now your soul is cast down and disquieted within you. Well, thank God that it is. If it were not so, you

might well doubt whether you had any spiritual life at all. You have been yielding to a harsh, unloving spirit, and it has swept over you like an east wind, blighting and withering. No wonder the old energy and life are lacking. The soul has not had its food. The Word has been neglected. Of course, the old joys are hushed. It is when the warm sunshine gladdens the earth that the lark soars heavenward singing; now overhead there are clouds only. You need not ask, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' The beams of the chamber cry out, You have starved your soul; how can it but be sick and faint?

Another common cause of depression is a low state of spiritual life: not any special neglect or any sin, but a general spiritual unhealthiness. This is perhaps the commonest cause of languid weariness. The strong man rejoiceth to run a race; but to the weak and sickly what a toil it is to walk a mile! There is, with very many, a chronic depression. They never get above it; they come, perhaps, to believe that there is no height beyond, and that to be cast down and disquieted is the truest sign of grace. One cannot help pitying such souls, though they deserve blame much more than pity. To have just religion enough to see one's self, and all one's life, a failure; but never laying hold of Him through Whom we are more than conquerors! Religion enough to have the devil's temptations, the upbraidings of conscience, the voice of duty calling, scolding perhaps; but not using His help through Whom we can do all things! Religion enough to forbid the old pleasures; but not enough to make the Master's service any other than a bondage! Religion not a

cure for all our care—only another care and trouble on top of all the rest! Poor soul, no wonder thou canst only sigh! Just out of the far country, far enough to lose the husks, but not far enough to get the Father's greeting and the best robe and the fatted calf.

Now, for these two causes of depression there is but one cure. The remedy for the ailment is not medicine, but diet and exercise. Don't go seeking for cordials and consolations. There was a world of common sense in the answer of the Eastern countryman to the learned philosopher. The great man had a camel that was wasting away, until it seemed at the point of death. 'See,' cried he to the simple son of the desert, 'here is my camel: I have tried cordials and elixir, balsams and lotions. Alas! all are in vain.'

The plain man looked at the hollow sides, the staring bones, the projecting ribs. 'O, most learned philosopher,' said he, 'thy camel needeth but one thing!'

'What is it, my son?' asked the old, wise man, eagerly.

'Food, Sir-good food, and plenty of it.'

'Dear me,' cried the philosopher, 'I never thought of that.'

Friend, there is your cure for depression. don't want pity; don't deserve it. Go and give your starved soul more prayer, more communion with God, more meditating on the Word. Then get up, and get out, and try to do some good to somebody about you. That is the only cure for your miserv.

There are other causes of depression: Loss,

Sorrow, and threatening Trouble. Or, again, there is a depression that comes without any cause that we can find, of which one can only ask wonderingly. ' Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' These two psalms (xlii., xliii.) give us a picture of a wholehearted child of God, depressed he knows not why. The rich manifestations of God's favour, that used to visit him, are cut off. The joyful fellowship with God is changed to a mournful solitude. There are. probably, such seasons in the life of every ardent Christian. There is borne in upon the soul a sight of its sinfulness, or a sense of uselessness and failure. Not darkness is it that comes over one, but a leaden dulness and insensibility. And yet under it, in spite . of it, there is a great longing after God, as under the frozen surface the river urges its course. Here meets us depression-gloomy, heavy, languid depression, and vet all through it what an intense thirst after God! As the hart panteth after the water-brooks: there on the rough mountain-side it stands for a moment, while from the valley below there rings the baving of the dogs; with trembling forelegs set on the bluff of rock, with steaming sides and quivering flanks, the quick, hot breath pouring from the wide nostril, the frightened eyes set on the far-off stream that makes its way between the boulders;—it pants for the refreshing sweetness of the water-brooks. panteth my heart after Thee, O God! This is ever the mark of the child of God. As the sick child tosses and frets for the mother's soothing hand, and only lies hushed and quieted upon her bosom, so the troubled soul frets after God. In Him is all the hope: the longing goes out after Him. To Him the

appeal is made: My God! He only can cheer and gladden again. Who is the health of my countenance.

In this depression, there are always two refuges for us, which the psalm suggests. One is our own ignorance. To myself I can only put an unanswered -- Why? I see only the present, and that but darkly and mistakingly. God sees the end from the beginning. Let me hide myself from foolish murmuring and hasty judgment in my own ignorance. And the second refuge, far better than the first, is this: it is permitted of God, and has some wise and gracious purpose for which I shall praise Him some day.

Here I stop, good reader, to trim the pen with which I write. I cut it and scrape it. If it only knew and had a voice, how it would cry out against the proceeding!—laid aside from its usefulness; taken up to be cut at thus—this side and that; scraped here and there; tormented so! There, it is done. And now as the fairer writing flows from its nib, I fancy it runs on with a grateful song to me for taking such trouble with it. Dear soul, thou art in the Master's hand. Why He deals with thee thus, I know not. And because we are so ignorant, do not let us presume to judge. But this I do knownever was so kind, so gentle, so loving a Master as thine is. Never was there one so wise. and I did but see as He sees, we should bless Him for doing as He does.

But there are purposes in this depression that even we can discern. It may well be that it is necessary for the soul to rest from joy, as from other things. It has been pointed out that the morning air is much more inspiring and invigorating than the evening air, and that probably the very atmosphere, like all other substances, is spoiled of its energy by the action of the light and heat, and requires rest. it is suggested: 'Joy fatigues the spirit, which requires rest from delight, no less than the body requires rest from labour. Grief, like night, is salutary. It cools down the soul by putting out its feverish fires. The night of death is a wise and merciful conclusion to the excitements of mortal life: with a calm, beautiful, wondrous strength the regenerate spirit enters upon its new life.'* It was the evening and the morning that made the first day. Quiet night came hushing and refreshing all things to wake up ready for a glad to-morrow.

But let us get up to higher ground than this. Isaiah sings of the treasures of darkness. By depression God enriches the soul with some of its most precious possessions; decks it thus with some of its most costly ornaments. If it were not for the night, the day would be robbed of the glories of the dawn, the sunset splendour, the twilight glow and all the starry stillness—

'So Darkness shows us worlds of light We never saw by day.'

See, for instance, how depression develops faith. Joy wakes up the daughters of music, and they make sweet melody, sitting in the light. But Faith, strong, brave, sturdy Faith, comes more commonly of sorrow. It is Benoni: the son of our grief, who becomes Benjamin—the son of our strength. It is

^{*} Pulsford, Quiet Hours, pp. 82, 83.

when the darkness comes and we can no longer walk by sight; when sorrow comes, and we can no longer rest in feeling,—then Faith stretches forth his hand to take hold of God for hope and strength. So our Blessed Master teaches us these lessons, as canaries are said to learn their sweetest notes—in the dark.

Jacob is slow to learn this lesson. He is blest with flocks and herds; he has his stalwart sons and his many servants. But he is not rich in faith. How can God put him in possession of this greatest treasure, and so make him heir to all the promises, a worthy son of Abraham, the father of the faithful? Well, the Lord will send him to a school where the lesson is taught, if Jacob will but learn it. come the sons with the blood-stained coat of Joseph, and the cruel lie about his death. Now, Jacob, thou mayest be ennobled; not in name only a Prince, but in deed and in truth. Every day remembering the mysterious loss, yet triumphing every day by trusting God. No; Jacob sinks down into the gloom, murmuring only, All these things are against me. And there he stays. So the years go by, until Jacob comes to find his son again—as we, if faithful, shall find all that God takes from usennobled, enriched, crowned. Then Jacob wept. Wept, no doubt, tears of shame at his doubt and murmuring—tears of grief at the loss of all those years, and of the lofty, blessed, kingly life that it gave him the chance of living. That discipline might have done a thousand-fold more for Jacob, than ever Pharaoh had done for Jacob's son: it would have enriched him with greater treasure;

have crowned him with more honour and glory; have advanced him to a higher dignity and vaster possession; and have ennobled him with an immortal splendour. Brother, let us not fear the darkness, but fear only lest we should miss its treasures. Fear not sorrow; fear only lest sorrow should come and go, and leave us no richer in faith, no nearer to God.

And not only faith: many another blessing is found in the gloom of depression. In the experience of very many it will be found going before more abundant blessing and richer gifts, like the mist that watered the earth on the morning that Adam was fashioned and the creation completed. plough turns the sod and buries all the buttercups and daisies, by which we children set such store, before the sower goes forth to sow, and another harvest comes. God enlarges our capacities as men enlarge their premises: there is much pulling down and digging out before the time comes for building up; much rubbish to be rid of before the Temple can rise in stately proportions as He would have it. This thirst and panting of the soul comes because God would find room for richer blessing. casting down and disquieting of the soul are only to lead to a deeper peace and a more satisfying portion in Him.

Then there is another purpose. Remember that God is daily training us in His school for better service in this world and the next. If this talk do us any good, you see one reason at least why David was cast down hundreds of years ago. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? he asks. Surely here

is one good answer, David: That thousands of poor souls might find comfort and help in thy words. Athanasius counsels his friend that when any trouble should fall upon him he should presently betake himself to the reading of this psalm; for that there was a way of curing by like, as well as by the contrary. A blessed homeopathy this: David's depression helping us out of our own. Oysters turn their sicknesses to pearls;—a rarer, richer gift is it to turn our griefs to the comforting of others. who was never himself cast down does not know how to lift another up. Though underneath the rough manner there may be a true and loving heart, yet there is apt to be about him who has never been to this school an impatience with slow, dull people that discourages them; a sharpness that frightens the feeble; a hardness that scares the timid; a gruff manner that undoes much which the kind heart prompts. It is in His school of depression that our gracious Master corrects this. Of course one may go there and learn nothing, grumbling only at the But amongst those that have passed with honours here, you shall find the purest saints on earth. There is a refinement and beautifying grace that seems only to come from this course. Such gentleness, such self-forgetting, such tenderness, such quick sympathy and quiet help! And not this only: such courage too, such silent might of endurance! Ah, but who can wonder? Was not the Master of this school Himself the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief? He lays His gentle hand upon us, cold, hard, selfish, coarse though we be, and teaches even us the art of pity,

which is altogether God-like; puts into us a love and brotherliness, like that which He hath showed; teaches us gentleness and that rare art of comforting quietly, like the Comforter Divine.

Courage, brother. Not many treasures are there that thou shalt one day set more store by than these which thou mayest find only in gloomy times of depression.

Yet remember, this depression is not to be permanent. Its purpose wrought, it is to pass away. The bleak east wind gives place to the gentle south; then the spices flow out and the Beloved cometh into His garden to eat His pleasant fruits. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.' Deal with depression as Paul did in the dungeon. So long as the night lasted he made the best of it, and prayed and sang praises to God; but when it was day he bade the magistrates come and fetch him out. Don't stay a moment longer than you need. Look for a way out; and if you can find it, use it by all means. Let memory fetch a cordial from what God has been to us aforetime, and from what Fly out of dull to-days He has done for us already. to sunny yesterdays. Former deliverances often open to us a new way of escape; back in the old workings there is a shaft by which we may climb up again. And send out Hope, to fly over the dreary waters, and under the leaden skies; bid her fetch a palm-branch. And stay the heart upon God. is my God still. The precious promises are as sure on dull days as on bright ones. Cast down we may be; but not destroyed. We are bound to God still

by nothing less than the life and death of the Well-Beloved. When all His waves and billows go over us, do as they did of old; they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. Ask Him for deliverance and expect it: 'O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill.' So may it be with us as with the psalm; which, though it begin as a dirge, a slow and troubled minor song, yet endeth cheerily: Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, Who is the health of my countenance, and my God,

v.

SUNSHINE: A TALK FOR HAPPY TIMES.

THE last subject was Depression. But that must never go alone. It is but half a truth, and needs this to complete it. That is the evening: we need the morning, as in the old time, to make up the day. So alongside of the dreary Winter let there hang, as companion picture, some happy scene of Summer. Out of the East wind, and into the sunny South; turn from the lament of the Psalmist, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? to the command of the Apostle, Rejoice in the Lord alway. (Phil. iv. 4.)

At the outset, Do not think that this means a seventh Heaven Rapture. Nothing is easier, perhaps nothing is more common, certainly nothing is more disheartening, than the way in which we exaggerate in describing religious grief and joy. We talk of hearts bleeding with anguish! Of course, they never do more than once, and happily that once comes to very few. Our talk is of such 'floods and torrents' of sorrow, such 'a whirlwind of grief,' as if the Flood did not happen only once in all time, but came to most of us very often. And in speaking of joy, we are apt to set it before us as rapture. So do not let us begin at once to think of the

ecstasy of some excitable natures or of some exceptional occasions. It is not given to many of us to soar into such heights, much less to live there. We want a joy that can walk along life's dusty roads, and do a good day's work, and thrive amidst bustle and home cares; that, like the caged canary, can sing in the kitchen, and that loves the prattle of the children.

'Rejoice in the Lord alway.' It is not to be the short-lived offspring of passing excitement, that shouts and weeps, and then cools down; an April day of sunshine and showers that ends in a night of sharp frost. Nor is it the childlike merriment of good spirits; nor a natural hopefulness that easily forgets the past, and doesn't trouble much about the future. It is a calm, deep, settled gladness in the Lord.

It does not change life, so that there are no difficulties, no burdens; but it edges the clouds with brightness, and in the darkness it can always see the stars. It does not turn the desert place into the garden of the Lord; much less does it bear us over the wilderness on wings. But it is an Angel-presence, like that which came to Hagar, bidding us 'Fear not,' for that God hears our voice. And opening our eyes, it shows us a 'well of water.' Or it is that hidden spring itself, cool and sparkling all through summer drought and fierce heat, hidden in its richness of fern and moss, singing day and night its gentle hymn of praise.

This is the joy. It is of much importance that we keep from exaggerated thoughts and words on this matter. Do not young people sometimes turn from religion disappointed, because they have been

encouraged to look for sustained raptures in religion, and have not found them? Many good souls spend their lives in a state of misery because they cannot feel the ecstasy that others have told of. Excitement is the test of true religion with very many. depend upon it, this oil of gladness is something that commonplace, every-day people can have if they It is not distilled from rare exotics and deliwill. cate plants that grow only in hothouses, and that cost a great deal to cultivate. There are three simples growing just by the gates of the King's Garden, and whoever will cultivate these three and mix them equally shall have this balm and oil of gladness.

The first of them is the sturdy plant—Confidence. There must be this Confidence—the superlative degree of hope: that in the dark to-day sings of a bright to-morrow; that does not only think about, or believe in the assurance that the loving Father in heaven orders all things, and makes them work out what is good and kind and blest; -but that lives and rests in that assurance. As in a factory where whistling bands, and whirring wheels, and darting shuttles, and a thousand threads bewilder and confuse the stranger, the maiden who tends the frame sits by, singing her song untroubled, for she knows full well that every turn and shooting shuttle and all these thousand threads are working out the Hers it is to watch and mend the broken pattern. Her name is Confidence. threads.

Confidence must be mixed equally with another simple found only in the King's Garden, a little lowly plant that grows on the bank of the river,

and bears a flower like the Forget-me-not. The name of it is *Contentment*. It is a rarer plant than the other; and yet he that grows Confidence can grow this alongside of it. Contentment—that keeps its desires level with its condition. When much is taken, Contentment counts up how much is left, and turns the evil round to find a better face upon it, thinking of the worse that might have been. Cultivate Contentment, or else there cannot be this joy in the Lord.

And having Confidence and Contentment, put in Gratitude. It will enrich it, and make it to sparkle.

But if it be thus easily made, why then is this Joy so uncommon? All desire it, and very many seek it. Why do not more have and hold it always?

Well, to some, gladness is much more difficult than to others. There are timid souls who have not the courage to forget themselves. And, thinking of themselves to bring some accusation, they magnify a hundred times every defect; but, to look at their comfort, they turn the telescope the wrong way; so that which is close by is made to appear a long way off and very little. They think of God as angry, iealous. Religion is the service of a hard Master, whose cry is ever: Ye are idle; ye are idle. they serve like the fettered Israelite: toiling in the hot sun, dragging dreadful burdens. What joy can religion have for such? O! how the pitiful Lord Iesus must chide these! Poor, frightened soul, this is not the will of your Heavenly Father concerning you. He is wronged by fears like these. Think if there lay in your path a little deserted child, cold

and hungry. You hurry to it with a yearning heart; eager to pity it and to care for it. But the little thing is frightened at your approach. It shrieks in agony at the words with which you try to soothe it. Your outstretched hands only add another terror. Poor, foolish child, you think. Think again. Are you not that foolish little one, poor, frightened child of God? He comes to pity. He comes to care for you, and to save you. Rob yourself no longer. Wrong Him no more. Dwell on His love. Lie down in His care. Read the heart of God in the living Word, Jesus Christ. So sweet Peace shall grow in place of the nettle Fear, and you shall learn to rejoice in the Lord.

Another class of good people do not rejoice in the Lord: the stern, the gloomy, the severe. too selfish to forget themselves. Hard-natured men of narrow sympathies, to whom the brighter things of life are vanities. Music, and children, and flowers, and holidays have no charm for them. of birds, the stretch of landscape, the splendour of the setting sun does not move them. Life is too serious to be wasting time over such things. ness—duty—absorbs them. O! it is a pitiable thing when all the child is dead in men; and they live on, grave, hard, exact, measuring out their life in square inches, without room for wonder, or sympathy, or merriment: holding Mercy to be almost a weakness; looking upon Pleasure as the mask of sin; counting that laughter is not in keeping with the gravity of life, and that Joy ill becomes such dying worms.

Now, of course, men who cannot rejoice at all

cannot rejoice in the Lord. And words are apt only to rouse the indignation of such men, who do not allow themselves to question, but only assert. Why speak of them here, then? Well, to warn you, perhaps, good reader, from becoming one of them in these times of furious driving; and to commend to you, if you are one of them, this exhortation of the Apostle, lest any judge from you of our God and of His holy religion. .

But there is yet a larger class by whom this joy is lost: those whose religion is mostly a regular observance of services, a half-hearted round of duty. The religion that rejoices in the Lord must have something intense and earnest about it. A languid, pale-faced, sickly man, who gets up for an hour or two and sits by the fire, can't enjoy anything; he has not vigour enough. Type of dead-alive Christians! They know nothing of this joy with whom religion is a matter of habit much more than of Knees reverently bending, lips muttering solemn phrases, care only to keep a strict morality in everything—there must be something more than this before there is joy in the Lord. Do not doubt for a moment the sincerity of these people. is true religion, only they haven't enough of it. They want more life and warmth and heart. You must put some force into the water before it comes sparkling in the fountain's life, leaping up towards heaven with joy and rainbow colours. This is the secret of it: worship, reverence, duty are not enough to create joy. There must be a closer communion with God; a whole-soul devotion to Him as the

Fairest, the Nearest, the altogether Lovely. Jesus is gone to the house of a Pharisee to dine. banquet is spread; the servants wait; the host is graciously polite. There is honour; plenty; splendour perhaps. And yet it is a cold affair, formal, stately. At the door there stands a woman, too well known, whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. as the gracious Lord looks up and catches sight of her, the glance is of such tender pity that she ventures to draw near. Timidly she creeps with faltering steps towards Him, and then falling at His feet, she bathes them with her hot tears, and kisses them; and lifting her hair, she wipes them Then from her bosom she draws the box of costly ointment, and the fragrance of it fills the room as she pours it on His feet. And bending over her, Jesus whispers, Thy sins are forgiven thee. There! it is out of that much love that joy springs. Duty, precise and formal, is not enough. The heart must be in it, the service must glow with love before we can joy in the God of our salvation.

And before we pass from this part of the subject, will you ask yourself this question: Can Christian people afford to live without this joy in the Lord? It is repeatedly commanded. Is he guiltless who passes by the word with a light indifference? It is encouraged by every promise and precept. May not the man himself suspect the religion that is so unlike the Scripture sample? It is the natural fruit of spiritual life; and if the fruit be wanting, the tree is not worth the having. It is very much talked of and sung about as the sole possession of Christian people. The Church is always looking pitifully on

the world and telling it: 'Ah, you cannot gather grapes off your thorns, nor figs off your thistles!'

'Well,' asks the world, 'will you allow me the pleasure of looking into your more favoured garden?' And one glance is enough. 'Your apple-trees, Sir, bear only crabs. Your fig-trees have nothing but leaves. Your grapes are sour.'

Surely we have no business to keep twitting the world about a peace that it can neither give nor take away, if all we can tell them is a dismal tale of trials and temptations, of failure and sin. Surely this is not what the Bible holds out to us? Surely this is not what Christ purchased at the cost of His own precious blood? This is not likely to fetch home the prodigal from the far country; such lean and discontented followers will never make anybody say: 'How many hired servants of my Father's have bread enough and to spare!'

Well, let us turn hopefully to see how we may make this joy our own. Confidence, Contentment, Gratitude, where can we find them? Only in the King's Garden. We must go out of ourselves for this joy, as for everything else that is worth having. We keep pulling ourselves to pieces to try and find this joy, and in searching for it we come across so many empty, dark, dismal places—haunted chambers, where foul things creep and sad memories mutter dolefully, that it quite kills the thought of joy. So it will always be, as long as we read the text, Rejoice in yourself. He who sees self, will never see anything, but that which he may well weep over. He who sees the Lord, may live always triumphing.

The opposite to this joy is not grief; not sorrow. He who was the 'Man of Sorrows,' is He who was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. The real kill-joy is worry. Anxious, fretting, wearying care, that blights and withers all like a frost; that gnaws out the very heart of gladness. But nine-lived though it be, here is the death of it—Rejoice in the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord as King. 'The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice.' Many people act as if they quite believed the old saying: 'Religion is one thing; business another.' Hundreds of religious people go fretting and worrying, as if the Lord had no interest in anything but one's soul. They must trust the Lord to save their souls; but to feed and clothe the body, to train the children, to care for the business—all that they must worry and fret over just as much as if their loving Father did not sit upon the throne; as if the blessed Lord had never spoken His precious. promises. Confidence, Contentment, Gratitude can never grow there.

Come, anxious, fretting, worried one, sit down quietly and think what the Lord has done to compel our confidence in Him. Have you noticed the first thing God did to man after the fall? He did not give only the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head—and then, having provided for the spiritual deliverance, drive man forth and set the sentinel with flaming sword to keep the Tree of Life. He put the corn into man's hand—a comforting assurance, 'your Heavenly Father feedeth you.' And then the Lord God made coats of skin and clothed the man and his wife. They

should go forth wrapt about with token of His tender pity. 'Your Heavenly Father clotheth you.'

See, again, where the Lord the King comes down on Sinai with majesty and splendour—as if to teach the people that in His highest Royalty He cares for everything belonging to every man; not only for the man himself. He sets His authority and protection around all that is his: his wife, his son and daughter, the prattling little ones that shout and play, the man-servant, the old labourer bent under the weight of years, the ploughboy who whistles at his work, the maid-servant whose happy singing cheers the whole day through. All is cared for: the very oxen that low from the pastures, and the ass that looks forth from the shed: nothing of ours but is encompassed by the love of our Father in heaven.

Then comes the Lord Jesus revealing to us the heart of the Father; and very blessed is the way in which He completes this teaching of God's love and care. He intensifies it all, and brings it down to the minutest matters. It is as if He said: In old time it was taught that God cared for the man, his wife, his child; verily I say unto you, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Of old time it was said that God cared for a man's house; but I say unto you, that God careth for the very sparrow that chirps on the house-roof. It was said of old time that God cared for ox and ass; verily I say unto you, that God careth for the very buttercups and daisies that grow where the oxen feed.

That is our Lord; your Lord. He comes close to us with all His tender love. He sees us not only in the room where we kneel and pray to Him in secret,

He comes forth to our work with us: in the office, the shop, the home, the road, the school, wherever our way lies, there He goes: always waiting eagerly to direct our steps, to strengthen us, to put gladness into our hearts. Rest in this, lie down in it, and let fears go to sleep. This is the King's Garden where He walketh and talketh with His child. Brother, come in boldly: here grows Confidence; here grows Contentment; here grows Gratitude.

But this is not all. Alas, the half is not told! The fretting and worry that are hardest to get rid of yet remain—a wasp's nest in the heart. Family, house, business-it is easy to trust them to the care of our Heavenly Father. 'But,' you ask, with a sigh, 'am I to be contented and grateful, so long as I am plagued with this ill-temper? Ought anybody to go rejoicing when such an accursed selfishness will creep into everything and poison it? Would you have me put on a glad face and talk with a cheery tone when all the time I am conscious that my life is nothing but a round of resolving, struggling, failing?' No. In heaven there is 'fulness of joy'; but here, where sin blights and curses, repentance and heart-felt grief are fitter offerings for me to bring.'

Well, let us look at this honestly. Here is a plain command for all, and for always: not an exceptional privilege for a favoured few, or for happy times: Rejoice in the Lord. And further, running right through the New Testament is there not a ringing triumph, quite removed from the round of 'resolving, struggling, failing'?—

- ' We are more than conquerors.'
- ' I can do all things.'

This is New Testament testimony, New Testament experience. Sin is a vanquished thing held in chains, to which we are to count ourselves dead indeed. Perhaps there is a lurking suspicion that dare not shape itself in words: that all this language is to a great extent figurative, and that the sober truth is very different. So we discount it liberally, as we do sermons and hymns and biographies. think! this is the Word of God; no jot or tittle of it can fail. That New Testament life is what ought to be; what must be. And that New Testament life is what would be if we did but prove those words -in the Lord. Turn back for a moment to the passages quoted just now, and supply what I purposely omitted.

- 'We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.'
- 'I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.'
- 'Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

We are to rejoice in the Lord. This is our position-in Him. In Him only can we find Confidence, Contentment, Gratitude. We were not saved until we learned that in Him we have redembtion: not in our tears, nor in our feelings, nor in our good works-in Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins. So we start along the Heavenly Road, in Him. But then we fetch in our own resolving again, and our own struggling—and so we fetch in our own failure.

is in Him all the way to heaven. We can no more take a step in the road to heaven without Him, than we could get into the road without Him. Some people seem to think they must be shot into 'the higher life' as from a cannon. Ramming themselves in with a tremendous effort; then working up much feeling, they wait for the explosion that shall send them flying heavenward. Here, too, the way is not resolving, not struggling, not fretting: 'I am the Way;' and our part is trusting and obeying.

Come, fretting soul, wearied and worn-out with the sense of failure, sit down and think of what the Blessed Lord is, and of what He has done to compel our confidence in Him. Why, His very name is Jesus; Who saves His people from their sins. Illtemper, worldliness, fear, pride, unkindness-the Lord is come on purpose to save us from these things: each of us from his own failings. For this He has all power in heaven and in earth; and for this He is with us alway. Yet so long as we go on resolving and struggling in our own strength, we shut out the Lord from helping us. moment we hand the work over to Him, accepting Him as our Deliverance, our Triumph, our All; that moment His Power is our strength, and 'we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' No longer resolving, struggling, failing—we stand still and see the salvation of our God. There is no rejoicing for us except in the Lord. In Him, we can rejoice alway.

Well, there it is for us as freely and fully as for any other, if we will but have it. Here is continual sunshine: 'alway rejoicing.' In Switzerland, according to custom, I had climbed some lofty height from which to see the glories of the sunrise on the surrounding mountains. It was a grand sight, as one after another the snowy peaks caught the first flush of rosy light, to watch them slowly tipped and crowned with gold, whilst the purple fell around the shoulders. It seemed as if the words of the Psalmist were fulfilled: 'Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He cometh.'

When the sun was up, we began to descend. Then I found that there were scores of little hills that did not know that the sun had risen at all. Today they were wrapt in the chilling mists. had no rosy flush of dawn: no golden crown was theirs, no purple robes. Tears, dismal tears, were all they had. And at the best of times they could only snatch an hour's sunshine when the day was 'You must make much allowance for these raptures about the sunset splendours,' I fancied I heard these dripping hills muttering to each other. 'What with poetry and sentimentalism, there is nothing to be taken literally. After all, I expect there is nothing else but dull misty days, and gloomy nights, with now and then a slanting sun-ray.' Ah, but there was-and for them too, if they had but stretched up high enough!

VI.

WITH US, AND YET NOT KNOWN.

THIS was the Lord's appeal to Philip. The supper ended, the guests sat about the table, the bewildering mystery of some strange, shapeless sorrow overshadowing them all. Calvary was close at hand. Already Judas had gone forth to betray his Lord. And now the Blessed Master might well have turned to His disciples, yearning for a few moments of sympathy and rest. But His troubled love is anxious to comfort and strengthen them.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know (St. John xiv. 1-5).

Then Thomas objects; speaking slowly and weighing his words: 'Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?'

Then said Jesus: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.

Now Philip breaks in—simple-minded Philip, a man opened-eyed and wondering: true, kind-hearted, faithful, but awkward in his way of putting things: 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' Then I think Jesus sighed. Had they not learnt the first lesson of His coming? And, looking on him sadly, Jesus said: Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.

Here is a startling question for every one of us. Jesus so familiar, so long with us, and yet can it be that we do not know Him? We might have examined this disciple, and should have envied his replies. 'Philip—St. Philip, if you will—dost thou know the Blessed Lord Jesus?'

'I do, indeed,' saith Philip; 'I am thankful to say that few have had such opportunities of knowing Him as I have had. Yes, I was one of His earliest disciples. I can remember the very time and place where I first saw Him. It was away in Judæa. We had been with John the Baptist, of blessed memory, and were eager to find the Messiah Who had already come, and Whom indeed our master had I heard that Andrew and Simon, my baptized. fellow-townsmen, had found the Christ the day before, and had gone to His dwelling-place with Him. hoped my turn would come soon; and the very next day I saw the Lord Jesus coming. He tenderly bade me follow Him, and ever since that I have gone in and out with Him, listening to His wonderful sayings and seeing His wonderful works.

one knows Him better than I do, I am thankful to say.'

'And you were more than a disciple, Philip?'

'Yes, unto me, the least of all saints, my Blessed Master gave this grace. I was ordained amongst the twelve—to be with Him; and to go forth to preach and to heal all manner of sickness, and even to cast out devils. I have been with Him now for three years, day and night, by sea and by land, in city and desert, and if anybody knows Him, I do.'

Then suddenly there comes that troubled face and the deep sigh: Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou NOT known Me, Philip?

How sad and dreadful a possibility is this! That amidst all our privileges and opportunities, our high position as workers, after all the lessons we have learned and the sights we have had of His power and goodness and glory, yet may He stand looking upon us with this reproof and appeal: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME?'

Before we turn the searching light of this question in upon ourselves, let us notice a truth which meets us all down through the chapter—that to know Jesus is to know all things. It is to know the Eternal Father, whom no man hath seen at any time. It is to know heaven and all the steps up to it. It is to know the way, the truth, the life. It is to know the mysteries of Providence, and the sureness of hope; to know the blackness of sin; and the blessedness of salvation. It is to know peace, and comfort, and joy even in grief so wild and terrible as that which hung

over the disciples here. If ye had known Me—that was to know everything. Not to know Him is to know nothing.

Let us think of it until we get it wrought into us. Here is the answer to all our dark questionings. Here is rest from all the fretting, pressing burdens of all times—to know Jesus. Here is light for all our darkness; a peace for all our fears. For every age in turn, for every man, the Book of Life is a sealed book-shut up fast; and vainly do we try to get at its pages. We weep that none prevails to open it; no wisdom, no skill, no goodness, no force of ours availeth anything. The 'Lamb as it had been slain,' He openeth it and maketh it clear to us. We sit bewildered, like the prince of old, perplexed by the truth itself, until we find Jesus. Then the day breaks, and the shadows flee away. Our sins, our sorrows, our mistakes, come from not knowing Him. He who knows most of Jesus has sounded the profoundest depths of all things; He has soared to the sublimest heights. All our failures, and all our folly, and all our sin bring the Master with His face of sorrows and His tender reproof: 'Hast thou not known ME?'

'Seek Him,' saith the prophet, 'who turneth the shadow of death into the morning.' We grope and stumble on in darkness till He ariseth, who is the Light of the world.

How many things there are in which our blindness and blundering bring our patient Master to us with this appeal and reproof: Hast thou not known ME?

The Lord speaks thus to those who cannot see the Father. We may know the life and story of the Lord Jesus; we may have accepted Him in the gracious purposes of His death and rising again. And yet God may seem afar off; adored in His majesty by holy angels, with infinite power and wisdom and love upholding and directing the affairs of the universe. True, we kneel and call Him our Father, but it is used as a title of reverential homage, not of blessed relationship. We are forgiven through the precious blood of Christ; accepted in the Beloved -of that there may be no doubt; and yet how the heart is troubled! Worrying about the future, as if it were full of terrible threatenings; measuring our poor weakness and ignorance against all kinds of dreadful imaginings. Ah! burdened one, surely the Lord bends over thee with saddened face: Hast thou not known ME? he that hath seen ME hath seen THE FATHER. There, in Jesus, is the measure of the love that binds me to the Father's heart: for me He has given the Only-Begotten, the Well-beloved Son. In this loving and brotherly Saviour the Father Himself comes near to me. Sit and listen to the words that fall from those lips, so tender, so pitiful, so rich in their great, helpful, God-like love. The Father speaketh the words. Dwell upon the works—the pity that stooped to the lowest; the power that healed the worst; the joy of blessing all; the deliverance for the troubled; the pardon for the guilty; the bread for the hungry; the light for the blind; the life for the dead. The Father doeth the works. We do not know Iesus until we see the Father everywhere and in everything, stooping to encompass us with His arms of love; with His own infinite wisdom ordering our steps; caring for us most tenderly; blessing us with all that is safest and best for us; girding, exercising, training us for richer knowledge of Himself, for closer communion and loftier service.

Does not very much of our thought of the world bring again that sorrowful face and its appeal: Hast thou not known ME?

Not in so many words, but in the aims and energies and confession of the life, we say: 'Give us the zvorld, and it sufficeth us.' To be rich, to live in luxury, to be great and important—all this is sought after as the real good. There are tens of thousands of religious people who have a kind of Sunday faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and on other days keep a strict regard for truth and the moralities of life, yet their ruling thought and endeavour is gain, or pleasure, or position. In the office, amidst the ledgers and cash-book, in the whirling din of the factory, in the home where they seek first the social position of the children, hoping it will not interfere with their religion, surely there bends that saddened face with its reproof: 'Hast thou not known ME?' To know the Lord Iesus is the only cure for worldliness. Here is He Who alone of all that ever lived, looked on before and saw all the paths of life—every condition and circumstance in which men could live; and Who could make His own choice. Here, too, is He Who had both power and will, so that He could command that which He chose. Come, then, and see in Him not only a truer and higher life, here is the only

true life, the Truth and the Life. He is born the son of poor peasants, and laid in a manger. He wanders hungry and homeless, without a place whereon to lay His head. He is the 'Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' What does it mean? Not that poverty is saintly, or that wealth may not be God's gift to men. To know Jesus is to know that the true life is much more than all these outward things by which we set such store; that it is to do the Will of our Father in Heaven. This is the If we would find out whether we know Jesus, let us ask ourselves what is the chief thought and endeavour of our lives. Is it business, pleasure. position? Or is it first to please our Blessed Lord, then to have so much of these other things as He sees safe for us? Is Jesus more in our thought and in our seeking than comfort, or honour, or gain? Is it more than any loss or vexation to grieve Him? Is it sweeter and dearer than anything of earth to please Him? Our gracious Master asks us here, too: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME?'

So, again, in our thought of sin. For we only know what sin is when we know Jesus. There are certain gross immoralities that we mark as sin; but, alas! how blind are we to its more subtle and more constant forms. How lightly we excuse the miserable self-seeking, the pride, the unkindness, the forgetfulness of God? How little we think of the good things left undone—the half done, and ill done! How slow are we to trouble about our unthankfulness, our shameful want of trust and of consecration!

Surely into the midst of this indifference and blindness comes the Lord Jesus with His appeal: 'Hast thou not known ME?' Ah, then we look up and see what our sin is! This sin of yours and mine has brought the King of Glory down to be a Man of So accursed a thing that it hath stripped sorrows. Him of His honour and arrayed Him in all cruel scorn and ignominy! There is our sin-it hath bound the Blessed Lord! There see the sins of every day and every hour, in Him Who hangeth on the tree with torn hands and feet, and crowned with Then can we sorrow for our sin when we thorns. see Him Whom our sins have slain. There do we learn to see what evil is, and to hate it. In upon our dreadful contentedness and unconcern there comes and looks upon us the Crucified, the smitten and stricken One. 'Have I been so long time with you,' saith He, 'and yet hast thou not known ME?'

And yet again the Blessed Master comes; for happily, there are those to whom sin is all this. Sin is to many a constant and a bitter sorrow. They hate and loathe it. The ill-temper, the doubts, the coldness, the selfishness, the indolence—these things are real and terrible burdens over which they grieve most deeply, and from which they long to be free. They repent and resolve and struggle, but all seems no good. The old failures occur over and over again, until it seems as if there were no deliverance for them. To such the Lord Jesus comes, most tenderly appealing: 'Resolving, struggling, fighting, failing one, hast thou not known ME?"

'Yes,' you think within yourself, most thankfully,

'I know Jesus. I came to Him and sought forgiveness, and ever since I have rested in Him.' And yet He asks: 'Hast thou not known ME?' Jesus saves His people from sinning. He would have you know Him for victory as well as forgiveness. He would have you prove Him as making us more than conquerors.

An American writer tells a story of a lady from the Northern States who happened to be travelling in the South, soon after the proclamation of the liberty of the slaves. She chanced to be detained for the night in a little country inn lying off the main road, and where it was evident that a guest was very seldom entertained. The lady was shown into a bedroom where the dust had not been disturbed for years. The servant was a wretched-looking coloured woman, without any energy; to whom everything was a trouble.

'Auntie,' said the Northern lady, as pleasantly as she could, 'I am from the North, and we are not used to having things like this. You know we Northerners set you free, and I think you ought to try and make things a little comfortable for us when we come amongst you. Just see if you can make this room a little tidier while I go down to tea.'

The lady left the room. She returned in about an hour, and was amazed to find the dusty room changed into a picture of neatness. And more wonderful than the change in the room was the change in the woman herself. She stood there looking inches taller. Energy was in every muscle and in every movement. Her eyes flashed fire. She looked like a new creature. The lady began to

thank her for the change she had made in the room; but the negro woman interrupted her eagerly: 'O! missis, is we *really* free?'

- 'Of course you are,' said the lady.
- 'O! missis, is you quite sure?' urged the poor woman, entreatingly.
- 'Certainly. I am quite sure. Did you not know of it before?'
- 'Well, missis, we did hear tell that we was free, and we asked massa, and he said of course we wasn't; and so, you see, we was afraid to go. Then we heard tell again that we was, and we went and asked the Colonel, and he said that we had better stay long with the ole massa. And so, you see, we's just been off and on. Sometimes we'd hope we was free; then, again, we'd think we wasn't. But now, missis, if you are sure that we is free, won't you tell me all about it?'

So the lady told the eager listener all about it the story of the war and of the proclamation of freedom.

The poor woman drank it all in. She heard the good news and believed it. Then she got up and walked out of the room.

'I'se free!' she said. 'I ain't a-goin' to stay with the ole massa no longer. I'se free! Not another stroke of work for de ole massa. I'se free!'

The freedom had been purchased with blood. The Government had declared it. At any moment liberty was hers, if she only believed it and claimed it. Not forgiven only are we; we are free from sin that we should no longer serve the old master. You have heard it often enough. And here, day after

day, stands the glorious Emancipator, sorrowful and pitying; wondering that the liberty which He has purchased with His blood should be unclaimed and unenjoyed. 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME?'

Then in times of bewildering grief like that through which the disciples were passing here, Jesus comes to each of us in our doubt and fear, appealing: 'Hast thou not known ME?'

To these disciples it must have seemed almost like a cruel deception. They had followed Him as the Messiah, encouraged by a power which declared Him to be the Lord of earth and devils. They had heard Him tell of the majesty and splendour in which He should sit one day upon the throne of His glory, with all His holy angels, judging all nations. Had He led them on by the show of a power which was so soon to be spent, and which should fail Him in this hour of need? Was He, after all, so weak that Judas could betray Him? So helpless that these Pharisees could prevail against Him; and that a company of soldiers could lead Him forth to die an accursed death? Was all the promised splendour to end in the cross and the crown of thorns?

Hast thou not known ME? To know Him was to know a word that abideth for ever. To know Him is to know a love that never faileth. This very cross, and all its bitterness, is but the way in which Jesus is purchasing their gift of life. He suffers these things only that He may enter into His glory. He goes away that He may prepare a place for them. that where He is, there they may be also.

So is it in every trouble. The doubt and fear, and questioning bring Him with His appeal: 'Hast thou not known ME?' Dost thou not know that the love which binds thee to His heart is an everlasting love? The wisdom which orders thy steps can never err. The promises are every one of them for thee, and can never fail. He Who laid down His life for thee, directs the sickness and sorrow—they are but the way up to share His triumph, working out 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' To fear, to doubt, to murmur, is not to know Him. To know Him is only to trust and to rejoice.

And how shall we know Him? There is but one answer: Love, and thou shalt know. 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.'

VII.

SPRING-TIME: A TALK FOR A MAY DAY.

"Thou blessest the springing thereof.—PSALM lxv. 10."

He is but a poor scholar who has not learnt to read in God's two Books. The great pages of Nature are written within and without with blessed teaching. And though it may need a wise man to understand some of the harder chapters, yet there are sweet and simple lessons that a child can learn, and that might refresh an angel's spirit. Already the winter has preached to us, that sturdy Boanerges; and the dry East wind became for us an instructor in righteousness. To-day let us listen to the voice of the happy spring; for in the Book of Nature, as in the Holy Word, there are four Gospels, each proclaiming the goodness and power and wisdom of God; each recording His miracles, yet each with its distinct message.

And let us listen, not only in order to hear the voice of the Spring-time, but to exercise ourselves in that grand old art of seeing God in everything; as David saw, and as our gracious Master taught us to do. There is a tendency in us all to 'localize God.' Under the baldest names and simplest forms there lurks this essence of High Churchism: the

tendency to limit the Real Presence to church or chapel, to services, sacraments and meetings. very purpose of all these is chiefly lost if they do not send us home to find God everywhere and in everything-in home, and in work, in joy and in trial, in difficulty and in deliverance. Read the hundred and fifth psalm, and see what David found in Nature. Remember how the blessed Lord Jesus bade us go forth with open eye and heart to learn our Father's care in the lily and the sparrow. only finds God aright in the sanctuary on the Sunday who goes down to find God in the home, in the office, in the workshop, and to serve him there all through the week.

It is this want that accounts for the fact of our having so little all-round religion. There are many Christians, but there are exceedingly few who have the beauty and symmetry of the Christian character. Like Ephraim, we are cakes not turned—one side done, overdone perhaps; but the other scarcely warmed through. Intense and fervent in the religious service; but yet, perhaps, in business not exact, not thorough. God is not there. In the church one may be very earnest and even useful, yet in the home show little patience, or tenderness, or quiet self-denial. So comes it that one may be a very pious person, and yet be harsh toward a neighbour, exacting, grudging, uncharitable. This is the reason of it: we don't look for God in the business as well as in the 'service.' We don't look for God in the home as well as in the Prayer-meeting. We don't look for God in the world as well as at the Communion Table. And not looking for Him, we do not see Him. And not seeing Him, He is not served in these things. We need to have wrought into us a living conviction: that the *earth* is not ours, much less is it the devil's—'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.'

Come, then, forth to the fields, where the young green wheat is clothing the hill-sides with dainty verdure, and the seeds are putting forth their early promise. Learn that God does not forget the preparatory work.—Think of all that has gone before this springing; it was very dull and wearisome. Harvest is a happy time. When the row of reapers bend over the falling corn; when they that bind the sheaves are busy at their heels, and others pile the shocks; when the laden carts go homeward with the golden burden, and about the farmstead are they who build the stack—that is a picture for poets and for painters. But it is quite a different thing when the preparation is being made. In place of Autumn skies and plenty, here is dull November. leaden clouds hang gloomily overhead, the sullen winds moan dismally, the chill rain beats down in heavy showers, the dead leaves are swept by every gust, and the trees lift up their bare black arms to the pitiless heaven. At such a time the ploughman drives his team and turns the earth in even furrows. And now comes the sower. lonely work; and a work of self-denial. He must cast away the seed, flinging it out of his scanty stock; thinking, too, of the evils that beset it: the hungry rooks are busy in his footsteps; the winter is coming and the snows will bury it; the floods may drown it; the later frosts may wither it; the droughts may parch it. Then the sower's day is done, and he, too, turns wearied homeward.

But forth again, ploughman and sower. See, here is the young green wheat, even, healthy, promising. The work of the dull days was not in vain, God hath blest the springing of it. Ah, brother at work in the Master's field, be sure that the dull, quiet, unpromising work will never go for nothing! God keeps His eye upon that, too, and will own and bless There are not many things that help the devil in his work of discouraging us more than that misquotation of Scripture about-a Paul may plant, and an Apollos may water, but it is only the Lord that can give the increase. 'Go on, ploughman; drive your team and send your shining ploughshare deep, but don't be vain enough to expect a harvest. Go on, sower; fling out that tired arm of yours and cast away your seed, but don't be sure that anything will come of it. A Paul may plant, you know, and an Apollos may water, but it is only the Lord that can give the increase.' It says no such thing. have planted, says Paul, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. He does; He always does. God owns the planting and the watering, and crowns it with the increase. Because it is the Lord's doing, do not think of it as a doubtful and uncertain thing. which we scarcely dare venture to expect. it is His doing, let us be quite sure of it. about the planting, if you will. Fear as to watering. But with the planting and the watering done rightly, have no fear as to the increase. That is the Lord's work, 'Thou blessest the springing thereof,'

Come and hear the parable of the field.—'Ah me!' sighed the waste land, 'what good am I? Yonder across in the valley they reap the corn. What a blessed thing it must be to feed the hungry people! That would be a noble work: to yield bread for the scholar that he may think, and for the toiler that he may work; to give joy to the poor, and strength for the world! But I am not good enough for that. Well, I must do the best I can. If I cannot grow corn, I must grow furze: a prickly thing, it is true, but yet its golden bloom is beautiful, and its scent is sweet. As for corn, I must give up all hope of that.'

But now come rough hands that set fire to the furze, and with crackle and roar the ruddy flames dance in the wind-and to-morrow nothing is left but a charred and blackened stretch. Poor field! it thinks its wretchedness is complete. 'I can't be worse,' it mutters sorrowfully. But worse is coming. They stub up the very roots, destroying all hope of future beauty. And then comes the plough, burying the grass blades that had begun to peep from the ruin, sending the sharp share into it, and leaving nothing but the dull, brown, dead earth. they done with me yet?' groans the tormented field. 'What are these feet trampling me for? And this harrow tearing me? And this roller going over me? Why can't I be let alone? What have I done to deserve such treatment?'

My brother, canst thou read the riddle? Our hearts have cried to God: 'O to live a true and worthy life! If men could be blest in us, and helped and comforted! O to make the world

stronger, to leave some hearts the happier and better because we have lived in it!' Then our prayer becomes a sigh: 'Alas! all is failure. Weeds come up instead of flowers, faults grow thick in spite of all our striving.' But God begins to deal strangely with us. What we had tried to make fair and beautiful comes to be black and hideous. Further off than ever seems the answer of our prayer—the end of our striving. And then the keen ploughshare of conviction is driven right across the soul. Worse and worse! All the good seems burned or buried, and all the worst turned uppermost, 'Why does God treat me thus?' you wonder to yourself, 'Why have I no peace, no joy, no fruit, as others have?'

Well, for thee and for the field the answer is the The Master has taken thee in hand. ing and ploughing, sowing and harrowing, are but the steps up to the harvest. In dealing with thee thus, the harvest is begun.

And note well, What the springing comes from.— That which God blesses is the seed. Prize ploughing won't bring a harvest if the seed is not there. Burning and stubbing, harrowing and rolling, are all nothing without that. What of good soil, of fine aspect, of clever farming? These will yield no fruit without the seed. All that we can do is in vain. and all that God sends will fail too, without the sowing of the seed. What of soft refreshing showers? What of warm sunshine? What of the balmy South winds? The seed is not there! Then there will be no springing. You might as well have a year of frost and East wind. That which God blesses is the life and growth of the seed. A truth plain and commonplace; but it is the obvious that we constantly overlook. Repentance may be deep and sincere; resolutions may be very holy and very strong; we may have a great many good feelings and good desires; we may attend religious meetings every day of the week: but there will be no springing up of new life except from the seed. The seed is the Word of God. Nothing can take the place of that.

And the seed must be in the right place. the granary will never grow into a harvest. a mummy's hand may keep its life for a thousand years, but it will not bring forth fruit. 'The seed is the Word' accepted, believed, obeyed and confidently rested in—the Word in the heart. Do not let us expect to find the life of God growing out of anything else. A hundred things will help that, but nothing can take its place. The Word of God sown in the heart and quickened by the Holy Ghost, that is the seed. We are to receive the engrafted Word, that is able to save our souls. There only is the fruit found where the seed has fallen into a good and honest heart.

Another lesson of the Spring is, that God blesses the beginning of life.—We have heard the parable of the field. Let us listen to the story of the seed. It is taken and flung into the earth as into a grave; just one tiny seed buried down in the darkness. 'Ah,' it sighs, 'I have heard of the corn, beautiful and golden—how it waves in the breeze; how sun-

shine and shade go chasing each other across it; how the people come with thankful hearts to bear it home with gladness, and how they praise God for the bread that is their life! But here am I, one tiny grain and nothing more. How can I ever hope to be anything or to do any good? The earth shuts me in, and holds me fast. If I could only once find my way up into the light, there would be some chance for me. But this is dreadful.' Cheer up, little seed, cheer up. All the harvests that ever waved lay once in the earth, weak and buried as thou art. God took care of them and brought them to ripeness. And He careth for thee too. He blesseth they springing.

Ah, thank God for this! It is our story too. We have heard of God's mighty men—His heroes and saints: but all within us is so weak, so little. And the earth buries us. Lift up your eyes to the fields across the river, and see there the white-robed, golden-crowned, triumphant. They were as thou art. They, too, were in gloom and weakness. Our faithful God watched and led them up to that. And for thee and me it is true as for them: Thou blessest the springing thereof.

But listen to the troubled little seed again: 'I am sure that I shall never come to anything like the tall and stately corn. Up there in the light how dreadfully the winds do blow! I hear them rushing and howling as if they were coming to sweep me away. How can I stand against them? And the rain too—how it pours down! And the terrible frosts! I don't think it is any good my trying.'

No good at all, poor little seed-poor timid soul;

no good at all if there is nothing more than this. Come, think how much more there is than all this. Over thee HE bends Who guides the winds and holds them in His hand. He controls the rain. The frost waits His word. He watches thee tenderly. He stoops to bless thy springing.

And now the sun's warmth begins to creep into the seed: the life stirs, and the little green blade pushes upward tremblingly. 'Why, I thought I was going to be corn,' cries the little shivering blade, 'and I am only grass after all—thin and green, and no golden grain! O, I shall never feed the hungry people! never! I am not a bit like that tall and graceful stalk in which I grew last year; and I don't see how I ever can be.'

But, come, if you are not what you would be, there is another fact that must not be forgotten - You are not what you were. The other day you were down in the dark; now you are pushing up into the light. A few weeks ago you were cold, hard, dead. Now you are striking down roots and taking hold of the earth. Buried but a little while since, now you are able to drink in the dew and the sunshine. Come, soul, hast thou no glad word of thanksgiving for Him Who watcheth and blesseth thus thy springing? If there be yet no golden fruit, is it nothing to be coming up into the light? Thank Thank Him that thy faith begins to strike its roots into the precious promises and to draw strength from Him Who spoke them. Thank Him that thou canst look up into the light of His favour and drink in the dew of His blessing. Thank Him that He careth not only for the ripened corn, fulleared and bending with its weight of plenty; but dear to Him is the beginning of life: Thou blessest the springing thereof.

And yet again this Springing may speak to us. The seed has grown so rich with blessing that now it can turn preacher. You bend over it with its fragile stem and its threads of roots, and you think of all the threatening evils. 'Ah, poor little thing,' you say, 'you can't do anything for yourself! And who of us can help you? We can't keep back the cold and unlock the treasures of the balmy South. We can't restrain the floods or fetch down gentle showers. We can't temper the fierce heat or divert the dreadful drought. How helpless you are!'

And the little wheat-blade lifts up its head in wonder, and stays quite still. Then it nods merrily, and if we had but ears to hear it, surely we should catch a little silvery laugh: 'I do anything! No, I should think not, indeed! And I don't want to, either. Why, I'm glad that I can't.' And again there rings the silver laugh of its happiness, and it dances again in the breeze. 'And you—thank you, but I really don't need your help or your pity, kind as it is of you to care about me. He Who fetched me out of my earthy dungeon, out of the darkness into this sunny light, He will take care of me still, and lead me up to ripened corn. He Who hath done so much for me can do all else. He will do everything. The rain-drops come down from His hand: I am not afraid. And the wind whispers His message: it won't hurt me. He blessed my springingnot that when I had begun to grow a little He might forget me. No, no. He watches me with all His tenderness and care; and I am safer than if I had the management of winds and rain, of cloud and sunshine. I will trust Him, and just keep on growing. Some day He will crown me with the golden crown, and I shall bend my head beneath His blessing, and somewhere in God's world there shall be something more of gladness and of strength because I grew.'

Yes; be sure of that. If God have blest the springing thereof, it is the promise and pledge of harvest. He Who hath done so much for us can do all the rest. Trust Him, and He will.

So the blessed Lord does not despise the day of small things. His 'gentleness' will make the little 'great.' His tender care, His gracious provision supply all need. Let us see to it that we be like our Father in heaven. 'He blesseth the springing thereof.' Let us be careful that we do not destroy it. There are hosts of people who think that they know all about corn, yet can scarcely tell a field of young wheat from grass or tares. 'You setting yourself up to be corn,' say they, contemptuously— 'absurd!' They forget that it is 'first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.' Some religious people seem to demand a great deal more from young Christians just springing into life than they ever expect of many more advanced. A moment's forgetfulness, a little youthful merriment, a flow of happy spirits—and these good people have been ready to cry out at once: 'This is no wheat, root it up!' It may be a good thing to prune old

trees with a sharp knife, but it is best to train young ones. Grown-up corn ought to bend its head modestly, and to be filled with golden fruit; but if the roots of the young corn are taking up strength; if the leaf is drinking in the sun and rain, give thanks and encourage expectation of fruit. We, too, have it in our power to bless the springing thereof. Let us seek the grace to do it.

And let us seek to get the Spring-time in our hearts. Old trees put forth their young leaves and are decked in new beauty. The hedgerows are thick with fern; and mosses and dark creeping ivy set off the hundred hues of flowers. The happy birds pour out their gladness everywhere, and make night joyful with their ceaseless song. And shall we alone, of all things, have no new life? Shall we be content to go without any fresh charm, any added beauty —as if so much in love with the dulness of our winter? Come, let us seek the clearer shining of the Sun; let us get into His warmer rays. blessed Master is worthy of more fragrant praise. He merits from us more abundant fruit. Seek we then a Spring-time in our hearts, that for His dear sake this garden of the Lord may be renewed in beauty that shall make Him glad.

VIII.

A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING.

'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.'-PSALM xix, 12.

ONLY he who has come to stand where David stood can say this rightly, meaning it. Let us follow the story of the cry and its fulfilment.

I. There are four steps up to it.

Looking into the words, 'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults,' we see in them four subjects: Sin, Self, God, Salvation. This cry can only come from some true view of each of these.

The first step is a true view of Sin.

Here is a man to whom sin is a terrible reality, plaguing him at every turn, corrupting and defiling everything within him—a horrible, loathsome thing that he longs to be rid of. With many people sin is a very dreadful thing that they speak of in their prayers; but really no proper and respectable person s ever guilty of it. It is a vague notion that belongs to the phraseology of religious forms; a curious survival of the Middle Ages, or perhaps only an ancient Hebrew superstition. But here is a man who has been arrested and convicted as a sinner, and everything within him has gone with the sentence.

Taking the whole Psalm, there seems to have been two agents in this conviction. Nature had driven

this home upon David's soul. He had stood in the stillness of the night alone under God's great heaven. He had looked up into the heights that God had garnished with glittering worlds. He thought of their vast distance, of their ever pursuing the appointed rounds. Then he watched them die in the light. And up rose the sun, splendid in gold and purple—'a bridegroom coming out of his chamber.' He thought of its far-reaching influence, of the space through which its light shone and its warmth was felt. In all this was a perfect harmony, a marvellous order; noiselessly, without strife, without confusion, the great King of Day arose and went forth to do his Lord's bidding perfectly; and perfectly each star had obeyed its Maker's will. Then David saw himself: little, vain, ignorant, short-lived, and yet a rebel against this great God of heaven and earth. Within him discord and confusion; a perpetual breaking away from the will of God; girding himself for the better things that he felt should be, then caught and flung as by some fierce passion, hurled along and swept onward, though a thousand voices from within cursed him for his folly, and though on before him there yawned the black abyss.

'Where are peace and blessedness for me?' cried the man. 'Why all this confusion and rebellion within me—so much greater, and yet, alas! so much lower than all things?'

Nature can lead us thus far. It can make us feel that sharp and dreadful contrast between the perfect service of all things and the restlessness and strife of our lives. Poetry is full of this cry, for the poet has had his ear opened to these voices that call to us from nature. So poor Robert Burns sings tenderly to the field-mouse, till the tenderness sinks into sadness at the thought of himself:

'Still thou art blest compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, ah! I backward cast my e'e'
On prospects drear;
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear.'

And so Shelley turns from the rapturous lark to his own sad soul, and sings almost exactly as Burns does:

'We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell
Of saddest thought.'

And even Byron, whose haughty pride silenced these deep voices in his soul, or permitted them to be flung out only in fierce scorn, feels this sharp contrast:

'The serpent of the field by art
And spells is won from harming;
But that which coils around the heart
Oh! who hath power of charming?
It will not list to wisdom's lore,
Nor music's voice can lure it,
But there it stings for evermore
The soul that must endure it.'

Then comes the next great agent in this conviction: the law of the Lord. Ah! when God's word shines in upon the soul, then we know what sin is. When we see that God has made us for Himself,

that He has required us to love Him with all the heart, that He has to do with every thought and desire, every motive, word and deed, that all the evil that has ever been within us stands out naked and clear in His sight in all its hideous deformity,—then are we utterly undone. There are moments when, as the clear light of God's word shines in upon the soul, the foulest leper is white and pure beside our vision of ourselves. From head to foot all is corrupt and accursed.

Here lies the mossy stone fringed with grass and nodding flowers, with creeping ivy trailed about it, coloured with all the dainty hues of moss and lichen, whilst upon it the bird perches himself for a strain of happy singing. Then comes some rude disturber and turns it over. The light of day flashes upon the black soil. Ah, what confusion! A colony of loathsome things amazed, hurrying, burrowing, rushing here and there to find some congenial darkness. So will the pleasant and goodly outside do till the rough hand of the law lets the light of Heaven flash in upon the heart. Alas, what foul and poisonous things do lurk within! Pride, selfishness, ill-will, falsehood, lust, covetousness. And the evil, too, that grows upon our good things, a blight that settles on the fruit—the fierce self-will there sometimes is in our very self-denial; the sleepy contentedness that forgiveness leaves sometimes in place of eager love and service. And ever there is the all-seeing eye of the Lord upon us, until we look up, and sink abashed and overwhelmed: 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son,'

Then this cry is born of a right view of Self. David sees that in him there dwells no power to put He tries, he resolves, he struggles, down this evil. but, alas! it is of no avail. Himself is against him-His heart is a traitor, and sides with the very rebels who work his ruin. Upon this second step let no man linger. The right view of sin only will either drive to a hardened indifference or to an utter despair. The right view of self only will lead to a perpetual struggle and a perpetual failure, as thousands find: or else to an abandoned and fierce defiance of consequences. 'I can't help it,' cries the man; and flinging the reins on his passions, he lets them go madly, anywhere. Let us pass on quickly and earnestly to the next step.

The right view of God. Faintly and dimly David saw that which for us is so blessedly revealed in all the life of the Lord Jesus-that God was come forth to help and to save him. The Righteousness, Wisdom, and Power of God were come forth for his deliverance. We need to have this comforting conviction wrought into us as the first dawn of a new life-that God is not against us, but for us, and against our Not to condemn us is Jesus come, but that through Him we may be saved. God is the God of our salvation; God in Christ Jesus 'reconciling the world unto Himself.' Not arraving against us His great Strength, but coming to deliver us out of the hands of our enemies, that we 'may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.'

So let us think of our God. Let it thrill us with expectation; let it buoy us up with confidence and

gird us with power, that the grandest manifestation of our God is as He comes forth for our salvation. Not in Heaven, amidst its dazzling splendour; not in Paradise, amidst its loveliness and peace; not in creation, vast, varied, wonderful; there is no wonder, no glory like that of Calvary. The very angels stoop to read the heart of God in the mystery of our crucified Redeemer. Dwell, slowly and adoringly, upon it all: muse till the fire kindles. To cleanse me from my sin the Eternal Father gives the Wellbeloved Son. For my salvation the Only-begotten lays down His life. To drive forth the evil within me the Holy Spirit of God is given to take up His abode in the heart. From Him we need not shrink trembling. We need not try to cloke and hide our sins. To Him we can come and fall down at His feet, and cast ourselves upon His mighty help. We can let those eyes look down into the darkest recesses of the heart, and can turn to Him with confident entreaty; Cleanse THOU me from secret faults.

Then there is David's view of Salvation. It is more than pardon that he wants. The cry is for cleansing. Pardon from that pierced hand can but deepen our hatred of our sin. That which has torn and slain the Lord of glory, and covered Him with dishonour, and filled Him with agony—shall this accursed thing lurk within the soul? All within us cries out for deliverance from it: Cleanse Thou me from secret sins.

It is more than deliverance from guilt and punishment. To him who has seen sin aright, the only salvation is salvation from sinning. There is no

hell to him like an evil heart; the plague and mischief of ill-doing is the horrible pit, the outer darkness.

> 'He that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts Benighted walks under the noonday sun: Himself is his own dungeon.'

To him who sees it, knows it, himself uncleansed is his own hell.

It is more than getting to Heaven. It is getting Heaven into us. For the true Heaven is a clean heart, a mind like those crystal walls wherein entereth nothing that defileth; a soul paved with the pure gold of truth, where God Himself sitteth on the throne, and all the motives and affections fall down before Him, and the thoughts wait on Him like white-handed angels; and all the daily life is the unwearied doing of His will.

Such is the history of the cry wherever it goes straight from the heart of any man to the very heart of God. 'I am a sinner, accursed and plagued by the misery of evil. I am powerless to overcome it. But Thou, O Lord, art come to help and deliver me. This sin is a conquered foe. Thou hast overcome it for me. Now come, O Lord, and cleanse me through and through.'

Do not let salvation mean less than this. We wrong our Blessed Lord, Who has paid so great a price for our Redemption; we defraud ourselves, for whom our God hath such high and glorious purposes, if we are content with less. Let our cry go out with earnest entreaty: 'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.'

As there are four steps up to this prayer, so are there four reasons for our offering it.

Because of the danger of secret faults. We cannot afford to spare the little sin. Do not plead for it, saying, 'Is it not a little one?' Against great sins men are on their guard and tremble. Little sins do more mischief in God's world than great ones do. A little sin! No, there is no little sin. as transgression of the eternal right; in its consequence upon the character and influence, there is no little sin. Daily prayer, and the devout study of the Bible, and the zealous doing of Christian work will count for nothing if there be the wilful cherishing of some secret fault. To live in grace, much more to grow and prosper, we must track the secret sin right away to its innermost haunt, and seek the cleansing grace of God to rid us of it. Beware of these hidden faults. The noiseless dry-rot will undermine the stately palace which floods and thunderstorms may burst upon in vain.

Because of what our Lord has already done for us. If there be any excuse for others, for us there is none. He has opened our eyes by all the dreadful agony of Calvary to the curse and shame of sin. Shall we go trying to blind our eyes to some secret failing? Since our gracious Redeemer has shown us in Himself the dreadful penalties of sin, shall we find room and refuge for one of His murderers? And since our great Deliverer has shown us something of His power to save, shall we not surrender our whole being to His cleansing power?

Because now our Master's character and credit is at stake. Look at the force of David's plea: Keep

back Thy servant from presumptuous sins: Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. Sin always meant peril, death, hell. But now it means more. Since I am Thine, O Lord, sin means Thy dishonour! My faults, O Lord, are spots on Thy renown! These secret faults are slights and injuries to Thine Almighty Power. Because I am Thine, O Lord, cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

Recause the world wants men who are saved from secret faults. The world can put on an outside goodness and go very far in uprightness morality, and it expects that a Christian man shall go beyond it and be free from secret faults. A little crack will spoil the ring of the coin. world expects that a Christian man shall be free from little crafty tricks of gain and all crooked ways of business, even though they of the world pretend to make light of them. They expect, and rightly, that the Christian should be more gentle and patient and generous than he who does not profess to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus. For the sake of those who take their notion of religion from our lives, we need put up this prayer earnestly: 'Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.'

Then there are four ways in which the prayer is answered. First by the precious Blood of Jesus. That which needs the precious blood of Christ can be cleansed by nothing less. With that let us ever begin and end. Nothing can come in to supplement or complete it. For sin there is but one Sacrifice; for cleansing from this guilt and pollution there is but one Fountain. And from cleansing from secret faults we need an habitual reliance upon the precious

blood of Jesus. Do not think of a long course of careless living and frequent sin, with successive times of repentance and renewal. We can only prove the cleansing power of the precious Blood when we seek it as the Apostle indicates: 'If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth' (is cleansing) 'us from all sin.' The clear shining of Christ's Presence, the hallowing and transforming power of His friendship, is the first great cure for secret faults. So comes very quickly the spiritual perception that hears the whisper of the still small voice; the spiritual sensitiveness that is quick to read His will, and can only rest in the clefts of the Rock. Fellowship with Jesus; walking in the light; and then the blood of Iesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

Then in this cleansing the Lord uses the Word: 'Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you,' said Jesus to His disciples. So St. Paul writes: 'Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.' We cannot afford to leave out the Word in the processes of our cleansing. Picture its scenes, and let them hang about the chambers of the imagination to hallow and adorn it. Let its precepts purify our principles. Let its promises inspire us with deeper and more ardent desires. Let its revelations of glory lift up and sanctify our aims and ambitions, and set the affection firmly on things above.

Prayer is another great power in cleansing us from secret faults. Take, for example, that great

Divine model of our prayers, after the manner of which we are all to pray. Look at its petitions, one by one, as illustrating this cleansing process. Our Father, Who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Thy kingdom come. Here is the motive for all cleansing. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Here is cleansing from self-will and selfseeking. Give us this day our daily bread. Here is cleansing from over eagerness about the things of earth; we rest dependent on our Father's bounty. Here is cleansing from greed; our wants are few; daily bread is all we are taught to ask for. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Here is cleansing from sin; cleansing, too, from all ungenerous dealing with our brother; cleansing from all harsh thought and unkindness. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. So we are cleansed from all indifference to sin and all unwatchfulness. Cleansed, too, from failings and hindrances. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory. So for our cleansing we take a bold and confident grasp of our Lord. From Him, through Him, and to Him we seek to be clean.

Yet do not let us think that saying these words will act like a charm to destroy these secret faults. But dwelling devoutly and earnestly upon these petitions, and confidently offering them, will do so. Let our prayer be a cleansing exercise.

And yet another agent in this cleansing is Providence. God reveals us to ourselves by the circumstances of daily life. A man is put in possession of himself by that which is about him. The deaf child

is dumb because none teaches him of his own power to speak. So by the daily ordering of our life and by that which is about us, our Heavenly Father teaches us of ourselves: of our strength and weakness, of His help and of our failing. In fields where men happen to plough deeper than usual they often turn up weeds-colt's-foot, and I know not whatthat have never been seen there before never suspected. So by His Providence God turns up the deeper self that these secret faults may come to So let us take life's discipline: its vexations, petty annoyances, disappointments, losses, teach us of ourselves, and are meant to lead on to the answer to our prayer: Cleanse Thou me from secret faults. If we will but hold ourselves rightly to all life, earth is not full of hindrances to this, but is ever helping towards it. 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' To what good? Not to selfindulgences and perilous luxuries, as we read it in All things work together for this our blindness. highest, deepest, fullest, truest good—to cleanse us from our secret faults. 'For this, and yet for even more than this. For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose, For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON.' machinery of all God's universe is at work to further For this is the great end of our daily toil and this. discipline; the joy and friendships and blessedness of life are sent for this, and for this comes loss and pain and all the bitterness and grief.

All things of life are rough hands that shape

these stubborn selves, or gentle influences adorning the character, that we may be more like the glorious Son of God, Look up to this full blessedness with eager longing. Press toward the mark for this prize of our high calling. Live out the truth of it in all In gain, the only lasting gain is greater likeness to our Lord. In grief, the only lasting grief is that which leaves us less like Him. And gain, the commonest, earthliest, homeliest gain, carries this pure gold in its palm. And grief, the lightest touch, or keenest stroke, is but the chisel of God's patient workman shaping out in our hard lives the clearer image of His Son. Let us be brave and patient, my brother; all things in God's great world are on our side to help us when we are trusting Him,—all things working together to answer this cry of our hearts: Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

IX.

FURTHER TEACHING OF THE SPRING-TIME.

'Thou renewest the face of the earth.'-PSALM civ. 30.

Now that once more the earth is being decked with the beauty of the Spring, it is a fitting and profitable exercise to follow the example of the Psalmist; to read in all its fairness a revelation of our Father's goodness, and to make its gladness a hymn of praise

And for this it is needful for us to have a right heart. David begins the Psalm by getting his soul in tune for such a thanksgiving. Many persons seem to think that to trace God's handiwork in nature is one of the lowest and most empty exercises of religion. True, many who fail to see God in the Providence of the daily life, and even in the great work of the world's redemption, may trace God in nature. But is it not also true that many a man can see God's hand in any striking deliverance, who never thought of Him in all the noiseless energy of the Spring; and that thousands trace the Presence of God in Bethlehem and on Calvary, who never looked for Him in the beauties of the world about us? Here as elsewhere it is only the anointed eye that can discern the Lord. A loving heart is the secret of true vision. How often has the new-

born soul found itself in a new heaven and a new earth-fields and sky and birds and flowers, all had a wonderful richness of beauty, all things shone with a radiant glory. When the man is made in the image of God, then again as of old all things are very good. A loving heart makes every man more than half a poet. It is the gift of love to read in all the great book of nature sweet tokens and fair emblems. So if we would greet the Spring aright, and if we would see in these things what the Son of David saw, we must go forth with the eye and heart that can see God. Here, too, it is truehe that loveth not, knoweth not God. On that misty morning when the strange voice came over the still waters and set the fishermen wondering, it was he, 'whom Jesus loved,' the loving disciple, who knew the call of the Master, and said at once: 'It is the Lord.' And at another time, when there came 'a Voice from Heaven,' some dull souls said it thundered. distant and threatening; others half heard, and said an angel had spoken; but the Son knew the voice of the Eternal Father, promising that He would glorify the Well-Beloved. It is only this quick spiritual consciousness that can see and hear the Lord. It is when we come straight from the touch of those gracious Hands that we can look up and see all things clearly. Here, too, 'blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

Nor is this all that is needful. The sweet meditations of this Psalm meet us only on consecrated ground. As there are the special blessings of the sanctuary with its united praise and prayer, and its teaching from the Word, so are there the special

blessings of God's greater Temple about us. singer of this song has left the narrow streets and crowded ways, and has gone forth into the country. He meets the pure breeze that sweeps over hill and valley—the breath of God renewing the face of the earth. And there he sings this hymn of praise. His soul is stirred with grateful adoration as he looks out upon the great stretch of heaven, the deep blue broken by banks of snow-white cloud; around him are the hoary rocks tufted with lichen and softened by moss. In the dip of the hills there is the sea, the white waves leaping up in boisterous play with the winds. Along the valley comes the singing brook, threading its way past wooded hills and on by the meadows where the cattle lie. fir-trees set their dark green tops against the sky, whilst far up the heights the wild goats clamber. The birds go sailing majestically overhead on their great white wings, and from every bush there rings the incessant music.

Town-life has some compensation. It brings a brisker brain, and a quicker gain which may be a good. It stirs a deeper sympathy—that is, if the sight of so much suffering humanity do not drive to indifference or to despair; and it secures a more energetic and business-like beneficence. But town-life can ill afford to lose the spiritual invigoration of the country.* There are some good men, perhaps, to

^{* &#}x27;He who would say "No God," first turns away from hill and dale, verdant with waving woods or bright with yellow corn; shuts out the sun, the moon, the stars from converse with his soul; buries himself in closets where the moving face of Nature is unseen, her beating heart unheard. There he weaves his chain of argument, constructs his family without a Father, his universe that no purpose animates, no will con-

whom lanes and fields and moorlands are dull, uninteresting, depressing. Well, leave them to be prisoned within the city walls, with their narrow strip of smoke-stained sky. For many there is in this great Temple not made with hands a calm and hallowed refreshing; a profound and joyous sense of God's Presence; a loosing of one's self as on the wings of the wind, and a delight in the Lord. About them they find ten thousand gracious messengers, all whispering of the Father's love. On every hand are ten thousand exquisite pictures of His wisdom and power. To pass along these glorious art-galleries of Nature with a quiet spirit and a loving heart, is to find a deep and delicious communion with the Lord.

And never was there greater need for the exercise of such meditation than in these feverish and unrestful times. Let the holidays and breathing-spaces which the age has rightly secured, not be given only to denser masses of humanity. Seek out some such joyous exercise as this. There is in it health for soul and body, mind and spirit.

Let us learn some lessons from the Spring. Here is a blessed token of God's Presence. Look at the constant repetition of 'Thou.' It runs through the whole Psalm. 'These wait all upon Thee; that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest Thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their

trols; traces laws that reveal no holiness, and bends to a necessity that knows no love. Atheism is a disease of towns.'—JAMES HINTON. 'The Idea of Creation,' p. 117, in 'Chapters on Thinking, and other Essays.'

breath, they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth.'

It is pleasant to think that God was no nearer to the earth at the creation than He is now, in its renewal. Its life still flows from the great Fountain of all life. Do not let the regular processes of the work come to make us think that these things are any the less from God. It is not a poetical way of putting it, but a literal truth: 'Thou renewest the face of the earth.' Our Father's hand garnisheth the heavens with stars; He draweth back the curtains of the night and maketh the day. His fingers unfold the buds and paint the flowers with their brilliant It is no process of blind laws. He who comes to show us the Father takes us forth into the midst of all these things. 'Behold the fowls of the air,' saith He; 'your Heavenly Father feedeth them.' His loving Hand throws forth their bountiful provision. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow.' God clothes the grass of the field. Over all is our Heavenly Father. The glad young life on every hand is His gift. Let us learn to walk the earth and see Him everywhere, for already it is full of the glory of the Lord had we but eyes and hearts to see it. Every bush tipped with its dainty buds and rich with blossom, every flower that gladdens the hedgerow, all the music of the woods, the breeze, and shower, every voice of nature—all tell of God. Each trembling grass-blade proclaims His Presence: and that not an impersonal goodness, but the presence of our Heavenly Father. 'Thou renewest the face of the earth.'

Then the Spring tells us that God has not grown wearied of our earth. We look on the winter. withered leaves drop off; the bleak wind whistles through the branches black and bare. A leaden sky is overhead: the dull, sodden fields stretch on every There is no warmth, no light, no colour, nothing to relieve the cheerless earth. Well, we sigh within ourselves, is it any wonder that God should have cast us off? What of Paradise can linger amongst us sinful men! Truth and honour held so cheaply, and any paltry bit of gain so high. many people content to be eaten up by a greedy Every thing measured and weighed, selfishness. not by its relation to right and wrong, but by its promise of a present advantage: the only goodwhat 'pays.' Outside the Churches a daring and open contempt of God, a contented indifference to His Holy Word and Commandment. Well may He cast off this earth. Why should He waste His fairness on those that do but dishonour Him even while they profess to serve? Why should He lavish beauty and gladness on a world in which deceit, tyranny, cowardice, and hatred are rampant? Well may God say of it: 'Let it alone. Blighted, withered, corrupt, accursed. Let it alone.' But, lo! our God cometh again. He bendeth over the earth tenderly. He staveth the fierce storms of winter. He sendeth forth His south wind to blow softly, and it comes with gentle whispers wooing the earth. Once more our poor world is decked in beauty. Again the tender balminess fills all the air. The glad young life rejoices on every side. He arrays it once more with loveliness. Our God hath not forsaken her.

With the life of the Spring let new hopes bloom in the soul. With all this renewal of beauty let faith be renewed. Again mercy breathes over the land. Once more God walks the earth, scattering His blessings on every side; and earth, beholding her Creator, struggles to become a Paradise again.

Then the Spring-time tells of the Father's Love. See this love at work in the first fitting up of earth as the palace of His youngest child. See how everything is called forth for Man's well-being. Sun and moon and stars; grass, herb, and tree; the life that sported in the waters, or fed on the banks, or roamed in the woods, or flew in the air; His one word summons it all into being, and He completes its use and beauty with His approval: 'He saw that it was good.' Then came the man himself, whose home had been decked with such tender care, and to whom was given such a vast dominion. So perfectly adapted was all to minister to man's use and pleasure, that now all things find their completion in him, and of that which was good before we read now: 'Behold, it was VERY good.' On every side were the tokens of God's love: the heavens above, the golden fruits, the fragrant air, the fearless living things. And so is it in every Springtime: God comes again to make earth beautiful. The same great Love that bent over Eden bends over us, yearning to bless. has blighted and withered much, thorns and thistles have sprung up where should have been rich plentv. Yet the Love that planted Paradise is the Love that meets us now. God renews the earth that we may read the handwriting of His goodness. every flower and leaf and blossom, in every singing bird, in all the green that clothes the fields, God comes teaching us how dear we are to Him. All good in itself, the goodness of all is completed in our service and in our joy. All nature, all Providence, all things that touch us, could we but see them aright, come forth from the Father, that we may see and know the love which God hath to us. Let us go forthwith grateful hearts to greet this message of the Spring.

Another lesson is of Unexhausted Power. many thousands of years these processes of growth and consumption have been going on; and yet there is no sign of exhaustion. To-day the earth is fresh and glad and young as ever: Thou renewest the face of the earth. All things wear and waste away. The power of all things is spent, and they must look elsewhere for new energy. The sun is for ever being consumed; the stars would grow dim and go out. Think, then, of Him Who renews all these. He openeth His hand, and the great sun has its supply; the stars shine on; His energy comes forth to make the earth young again until it sings with gladness; the pastures are clothed with flocks, the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy. Well may our meditation of Him be sweet. Who is a strong God like unto our God? To know Him as our Father through Christ Jesus, to rest in the sure safety of His keeping, to live compassed about with these Almighty Arms, to leave all our cares with Him, and to have the heart satisfied with His goodness,—this is blessedness indeed.

And here, too, is Perfect Wisdom. Since first the earth shone out upon the darkness, fresh from her

great Creator's hand, no new methods have been adopted. Our God makes no experiments. There are no new discoveries for which old ways are cast Man's way upward is in blundering from step to step, guessing, trying, changing. But since the first Spring gladdened the earth, each year it has come for hundreds of years renewing the earth. Perfection marked the beginning and every step of God's works. Time finds no flaw in it. Experience can suggest no improvement; and science is ever unfolding to us new and wonderful proofs of this Eternal Wisdom. Again let the soul delight itself in this gracious Lord. All-wise is He in all His ways—perfect in all His works. To know that He directs all our steps and orders our goings; to know that the discipline of our life, its work and pleasures and troubles, are under His direction, is indeed to be blest. Trust in Him with all the heart Who shows forth His Perfect Wisdom in each grass-blade, and in the least and lowest of His doings. Fear not: thou art much more than all these.

There is in the Spring a glad lesson for ourselves. Alas! the soul, too, has its winter. Bleak and chill and barren is it at times. The cruel frost of unbelief or of neglect withers all within it. The very desires sleep, ice-bound. It puts forth no promise of lifeno peeping bud, no hopeful bloom. The flow of our thanksgiving is held back, prisoned by the cold. We remember happier seasons, as we shiver and fear-times of luxuriant summer, times of fruitful autumn, and we wonder when these glad seasons shall come again. O! blessed be God Who reneweth the face of the earth, He restoreth the soul. His south wind bloweth softly. The desires are loosed, and begin again to flow out after God. The warmth of His favour touches and melts us. The gentle rain of His Spirit refreshes us. Hope begins to bloom again. Love fills the soul with balmy sweetness. Joy is heard singing once more, and new life comes clothed in new beauty.

All about us are parables for our meditation. The trees and hedgerows and fields preach to us. 'Behold,' they say, 'what God can bring forth from us.'

But the other day the old oak stood bare and twisted and knotted and gnarled—a thing far removed from any gladness, and without a sign of life. But all the gentle influences of the Spring set themselves to bless it. . Up from its secret depths the sap began to flow once more. The branches were tipped again with buds, and now the dainty young leaves begin to rustle in the breeze; the birds find generous shelter, and sing from its shady depths their grateful songs. The brown field stretched, mere furrowed earth, without a token of life or any promise of beauty; but underneath and over it came the power from on high, and dressed it in the 'living green,' and now the sunshine and shadow go playing across the young wheat. The very hedgerow, which but a month ago, was a thing of matted grass and rotting stalks and tangled briers, is tricked out anew; and now primroses cluster thickly over it, and the violets scent the lane. The old thorn-bush that grew a sign of the curse, without beauty or worth, hastens to put on its suit of 'May,' and shall soon be covered with its exquisite bloom, and shall fling out on the winds its delicious fragrance.

Let not all nature put us to shame. This beauty and gladness, let them not preach our condemnation. We would not have it true of us as the poet sings of the yew-tree:

O! not for thee the glow, the bloom; Who changest not, in any gale, Nor branding summer suns avail To touch thy thousand years of gloom.

Think how infinitely greater than all the forces of the Spring is the provision for our new life. Ours is the abiding Presence of Him by Whom and for Whom all these things were made. He comes to dwell within us, lifting us up by His own power from the death of sin into the life of righteousness. That Holy Spirit Who is the life of all things, comes to abide for ever with us, to enrich us with His grace, to beautify us with salvation, and to adorn us with the likeness of Him Who is the altogether Lovely.

X.

ONE-SIDED RELIGION.

'And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.'—ST. LUKE x. 31.

THE parable was spoken as the seventy returned to Jesus, rejoicing that even the devils were subject to them, in His name. They were walking with their Lord, when a certain lawyer stept forward and asked, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

What is written in the law? asked Jesus. How readest thou? The answer was promptly given, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart... and thy neighbour as thyself.

The Lord Jesus commended the answer; but the man, willing to justify himself, asked, And who is my neighbour? The reply was this parable of the Good Samaritan. The scene about them probably suggested the story—the steep road that 'went down' some three thousand feet from Jerusalem to Jericho. Looking from the pathway they may have seen some trace of the robber bands who infested the place in such numbers as to need little secrecy. These brigands and their deeds of cruelty seem always to have been associated with the rocky twinings and the limestone caves. Later the Knight Templars

banded themselves together to protect the pilgrims in this very place, and to this day an escort of soldiers attends the traveller down these dangerous passes.

Along this road then the man is going towards Jericho, with glaring rock on the one hand, and on the other the steep edge from which he looks down over the winding road to the green plains of Jericho. Suddenly he is surrounded by the robbers. Breaking upon him from their lurking-place, they seize him with fierce words and threatening looks. He is terrified into instant submission. They strip him roughly of everything. Then burdened with their spoil they ride off, leaving the poor fellow there, naked, bleeding, and half dead. All is still again. The fierce heat beats upon him; the painful bleeding wounds have none to tend them; fever burns in him with its agony of thirst; hope itself sickens, and the sufferer in his misery longs that he could die.

Now he hears approaching steps. The poor man lifts himself and strains his eyes. Heaven be thanked! it is a priest. Any countryman were good, but a priest is best of all. Who else would be so touched with the feeling of his misfortunes? Who else so quick to help and so skilful in binding up the wounds? But lo, as he looks, the priest catches sight of him, stands for a moment—and then goes down the steep footpath, a short cut to the winding road below.

WHEN HE SAW HIM HE PASSED BY ON THE OTHER SIDE!

The man sinks back with a groan,—waking up to

a moment's hope only to be crushed with this new wretchedness. Miserable, parched, dying—let death come swiftly! The weary, dreary minutes pass, and he lies perhaps almost fainting, when suddenly a shadow falls on him, startling him. Opening his languid eyes he sees a man standing over him. With parched lips and gasping breath he prays him piteously for help. But the new-comer scans him coldly, and gravely shakes his head. Perhaps he gives him good advice—his representative of to-day would have left him a tract; very likely intimates that it was a judgment on him for his sins, or the penalty of his carelessness. There are hundreds of such religious people, with whom misfortune is the greatest sinalmost the only one. Then he goes away up the hill-side, flattered by the sense of his own goodness, and thanking God that he is not as other men are, even as this wretched traveller.

O heaped-up misery! to hope, only to be so cruelly thrust back into despair. Can you not understand how some men come to think and talk of religion as they do?

'Is this your boasted humanity!' he mutters bitterly. 'The dignity of manhood! Don't talk about love and brotherliness—it left me here to perish! And a priest, too! and a Levite! And this is their religion!' Lying there thus, does he think of the splendour of the Temple, of its gorgeous services, its rapturous praise, its pomp and grandeur? Oh, how poor and empty it must have seemed to him beside a little bit of helpful brotherly love. And does he remember, how as he came down from the Temple service he met a heathen riding at

the gate, and that at the sight of him he spat upon the ground in scorn, and hissed between his teeth the name of 'dog'? Surely he must think within himself that a Jew after all was little better than that scorned Samaritan—he could not do less than this priest and Levite had done.

In the midst of such thoughts, he hears the careful steps of the mule; and perhaps the music of a happy soul ringing out a chant of praise. The wounded traveller raises his head as best he can, and looks up the hill. Now round the sharp corner the newcomer rides full in sight. Well may the man sink back heavily—why, it is the very Samaritan whom he had spurned; the heathen 'dog' that he had cursed as he had passed out of the gate. But see, the Samaritan springs from the mule and hurries to He kneels beside him full of pity and eagerness to help. The wounded man stares dumb with wonder; then loving thanks come welling up in tears and broken words. With gentle hands this stranger anoints his wounds, cleansing and soothing them. He tears from his own dress the strips to bind them. He moistens the parched lips with wine. him tenderly, he sets him on the mule; and in the glowing sunset leads him on over the rugged road to the wayside 'inn,' and provides for his wants. Then with the pure gladness of a good deed filling all his soul he goes on his way singing his psalm of thanksgiving to his God.

Such is the story; one of our Blessed Lord's stories. But let us turn back to the character of the priest who passed him by. Here is religion without brotherly love.

Here, certainly, is a religious man—a priest. He is constantly engaged in the service of God. He is perfectly familiar with the Scriptures. He is not only a professor of religion, but holds a foremost and very sacred office in the Church. Let us seek to make his acquaintance. It is not a difficult matter to turn the conversation to the subject of his religious privileges, and his own position. He is a son of Abraham, of the house of Aaron, in the long and glorious succession of that noble ancestor. talks with pride of the antiquity of the Church; of memories and traditions reaching back to the misty He recounts the deeds beginnings of the world. such as made his people glorious. He speaks of the lustrous names adorning the annals of his people. His soul warms with enthusiasm as he tells of the coming Messiah. He himself has faith in God, strong, triumphant, haughty. The God of Israel reigned-He should subdue the Romans, and make the world His footstool. We go up with this priest to his worship. He bows in the lowly confession of sin. He presents the sacrifice, and is pronounced absolved He takes part in the reading of the and justified. Holy Word. He joins in the rapturous singing of He bears the confession of the people the psalms. before God, and comes forth in turn to speak their forgiveness and acceptance; and breathes upon them the blessing and peace of the Most High. Thankful to know such a religious man, we journey with him as he returns to Jericho. We are talking together of 'good things,' when suddenly we catch sight of this poor wounded man. We hear his groans. We hurry on to help him. How fortunate that the priest

should be here. But see, the priest has stopped! He turns down the bye-way, and leaves this man to perish thus!

What can we make of it? What is to be said of it? Is it all empty talk—this theology and boasted superiority and selfish confidence in God, whilst the man is left here to die. No, not that. In many respects this is a truly religious man—a one-sided religion, perhaps, that goes along the great highway of duty to God, but turns aside from duty to the brother; that is exact in Temple services, but fails in services outside. A religion that walks in the light of the first commandment (reading, however, duty and service for love); but as for the second commandment, it is trodden down under every step that he takes. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—he broke through that—walked over it, perhaps without seeing it, and passed by on the other side.

Let your eyes follow the man as he goes down the hill, whilst this neglected duty lies here, in the highway. Is it not the picture of very much of the religion that exists to-day? A priest, without any love to his neighbour. Our religion may be orthodox enough. It is perhaps precise in its definitions, quite fortified in its proofs. It may be earnest in the services, and devoted to all the ordinances of God's house—constant at meetings, and busy in Church affairs. Yet all the time out on life's highway lies this neglected duty. Sincere, spiritual, earnest—yet 'he passed by on the other side.' Religion without brotherly love.

As a priest this man was probably liberal, too. In this matter the Jew could put the average Christian to the blush. It takes the leverage of a distinct society, with pamphlets and public meetings, to lift up the giving of a few to one-tenth of the income, and there are thousands who will not let that amount of force touch their substance. The Jew must have given in all not much less than a fifth. This man does not button up his pockets and pass by on the other side to save the expense of being generous. We may be very liberal in religion,—so much the better if we are; and yet we may leave this neglected duty lying there on the highway. He passed by on the other side.

So, then, here is religion—sincere, earnest, spiritual, liberal, yet it fails in brotherly love. That there is very much of such religion none can deny. A more serious question is this—are we not content with such a religion?

We think it is enough if we can come together and sing, and pray, and read the Word, and go home with devout feelings and the consciousness of having breathed a holy atmosphere—'a nice comfortable feeling.' If this priest could drop in at the service, and sit in your pew, and be interested in the sermon, and have 'a good feeling,' he would go away contented, staying outside perhaps to speak of the nice But ought the preacher to let him go away content? Would you like him to do so? not we all be glad if some honest outspoken man gave him a bit of his mind? 'You call yourself a religious man, do you, sir? And yet you left that poor fellow to perish like that! You come here and lift up your head complacently and sing and prayso very good, and all the time there he lies in the

glare of the sun, left to die! You saw him in his misery and you deliberately turned out of the way and left him to perish!' Strong language would almost be too good for him. But let us look at We needn't go to Jericho to say these The priest has come to our service perhaps. He does sit in your pew. Sir, you have heard sermons for years, and are a religious person. Step out from the comfortable seat and the Sunday's quiet, away here to the week-day. See that angry man there, flinging out hot words of wrath and strife, wounding the hearts of those about them, and then passing by on the other side—has your religion nothing to do with that? Madam, listen to that bit of malicious slander that is being poured into somebody's ear, stabbing the character with words cold and hard, and sharp as steel, ay, and poisoned, too. And yet the second great commandment is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Here is a man struggling to get on, but over against him is the religious neighbour, who says to himself. - Business is business—the weakest goes to the wall,' and he drives him down with keen competition and leaves him to starve. And all the time it is written—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Surely there is a frightful waste somewhere. What hundreds of sermons are preached, listened to and enjoyed, and yet they fail to mellow the temper. How many 'good times' we have, and yet the words keep their razor edge, and we snap out irritable and sharp. How many 'blessed feelings' come and go, but never any increase of gentleness, any trace of tenderness, any bit of simple brotherly love. There is much truth in what somebody has said about stoves that create a great deal of heat, that burn with beautiful clear fire; only it never comes out to warm the house, it all goes up the chimney. What of good times, of lovely feelings, of heart warmings, if they all go up to heaven in rapture, and never come out to warm and gladden the atmosphere at home, and in the office, and the poor shivering world about us?

But it is only fair that we should hear this priest in self-defence. 'Now then, sir, what is your account of it?'

'Well, it is true that I was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and that I came in sight of this man lying wounded in the road. It is what I have often seen before on that road, and though that did not lessen this man's distress, yet familiarity does destroy much of the romance of these things. it weighed with me that if once I began to help such people, there would be no end to it. Then it should be remembered that I had a long journey before me, and to delay with this man would expose me to the perils of the night. Besides, I was going along a road infested with robbers. I thought it by no means unlikely that they were lurking in the neighbourhood. I have heard, indeed, that they have even feigned to be wounded and robbed in order to fall more easily upon those who come to offer help. didn't know this man. He had no claim upon me in any way. And I have generally found that their own folly or carelessness is at the bottom of it when these fellows get into trouble. Then I was quite unprovided with anything for his relief. The little wine I had I needed for myself, for I am of a weak constitution; and I had but a very little oil; and as for his wounds I had no means of binding them up. So I did what I thought prudent, and left him.'

'But you see the imprudent Samaritan might have said all this.'

'This Samaritan is, I admit, a very noble man, and everybody must admire him. Most praiseworthy, certainly, is such self-denial and generosity. It were well if it were more common amongst that class of people. But when you attempt to press this upon us as a general duty and an example that we are bound to imitate, I cannot agree with you. push this to a law you will upset all business dealings. The creditor must not sue for his debt, nor the tradesman compete with his neighbour. as between landlord and tenant, or between master and servant, and where are you? There is one's position, too-you can't go looking after every poor body who has got into trouble. You really can't expect people, because they are religious, to go giving their wine to beggars, or to tear up their clothes for every stranger's wounds.

Now I am sure that many will say 'hear, hear' to the priest's defence. Many heads nod their sympathy with it. Well, thus we may excuse ourselves. We may propose difficulties by the score, and state cases that are puzzling. And yet this is not merely a picture of tender and generous doing for us simply to look at and admire. It rests on a commandment—on the second great commandment—thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. And when the Lord

has said 'thou shalt,' excuses are blasphemous insults. Here is not a dainty bit of sentiment, but a broad duty. A story with this application—pointed, personal, practical: Go and do thou likewise. it as we may, let us remember that here is the law by which we are to be judged. Not only what may be, not even simply what ought to be, but what must be.—Thou shalt. A commandment enforced with such weight and warning as scarcely any other is. Listen to what John says: 'If a man say I love Gcd, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, Whom he hath not seen?' Weigh these solemn words: He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. With what terrific force all this teaching gathers itself up in that last dreadful scene, when the Son of Man comes in His glory to judge the world! 'Then shall He also say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink. Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ve did it not to one of the least of these, ve did it not to me.'

But the authority of the commandment is not all. See its difficulties solved, and objections silenced.

The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Grace and truth! Not truth only, showing us what must be, but grace to help us—grace to take our hand and lead us in the way of truth, and to make us more than conquerors. These practical difficulties vanish when we turn be-

lievingly to the cross of our Saviour. There is the uttermost setting forth of the two great commandments, and thence we draw strength for a glad service and a perfect obedience.

Come, O my soul, and see what love hath done Knowest thou how much thou owest unto thy Lord, that thou shouldst be so ready to limit this commandment of His? When the law came with a warrant for thy apprehension-when thou wert already convicted and condemned to death. lo, the Holy One of Israel, the King of Glory, came down to take thy place, He, His own self, bare thy sins in His own body on the tree. He is bound for thy deliverance—He is stricken for thy escape. Behold the Man! Follow Him, arrayed in mocking robe, and crowned with thorns. See Him buffeted and scourged, stricken and smitten. For thee, my soul, for thee He hangs upon the accursed tree. blood is the price of thy ransom. For thee that agony, the pierced hands and feet, the bleeding brow, the broken heart. He dies—dies that thine may be life for evermore. Look upon thy crucified Redeemer. Dwell upon this wonderful love. Measure something of its height and depth, its length and breadth. Take it all as thine own. The Son of God, who loved thee and gave Himself for thee. In sight of that there can be but one response, surely it flows up already within us, filling all the heart and mind. Beloved, if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. Oh, how can there be anything less than this? Loved with such a love, forgiven so much at such an infinite cost, can we go forth to be harsh and exacting to those about us? Shall I take

my life from that pierced hand, and then go forth to be scolding and angry? What, was the King of Glory scourged and slain for thee, and yet thou, who art His disciple, canst not bear a slight or forgive an offence? Our blessed Lord for our salvation. hung in dreadful anguish and cruel thirst, accursed of men, forsaken of God, numbered with the transgressors—and can I call Him my Lord, and yet be unwilling to deny myself of any comfort for another's Shall I leave the wounded wayfarer, grudging him my wine and oil, and pass by on the other Shall my robes be washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and yet I cannot spare a strip to bind up my brother's wounds? Think, O my soul, how patiently that gracious Lord hath borne with thee, how kindly He hath helped thee, how gently chided thee in all thy folly. Canst thou, then, be to any hasty and irritable, since thou hast found such love from Him? Hither bring thy difficulties. Fetch up the objections to the Cross. He laid down His life for us. Where are the limits now? Nowhere short of this-We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

So let us take it as a simple and homely duty for all. A certain priest came that way. The wounded man lay right in his path. The opportunity was not sought, but almost stumbled upon. The commandment is for home use—for the daily commonplace ways of life. Do not let there float before us dreams of splendid heroism, high and arduous duties, vast enterprises, and mighty schemes of doing good. As we have stated already, there grew up in this very place, and for the protection of the pilgrims, the

brotherhood of the Knights Templar. They came in glittering coat of mail, helmeted and spurred, with the cross daintily graven in the shield, and with jewelled harness sparkling in the sun, their horses prancing in their pride. That was the later rendering of the parable. But the parable of the Lord Jesus is much homelier. A simple peasant from Samaria comes riding along the dusty road, mounted on a mule, or more likely still, an ass; he sees a man in trouble and gets off and helps him, and does all he can for him, and goes on his dusty way again. This is the service that the commandment requires: this is what Jesus impresses. Love all along the common roads of life—the dusty highways, and the lonely by-ways. This is the service that He asks of us-simple love to all as His redeemed, and as our brothers; kindness always; gentle words and helpful charity. All this, made real and earnest by a hardy self-denial, and what is higher still and rarer, by simple unselfishness. Here is the daily service of Christ for all of us. For men—in the home with the children, in the office with the clerks, in the workshop, and in the busy world—patience, meekness, brotherly kindness, love. These are the fruits that should peep forth from the leaves of our profession. are what we must be finding, in our prayers and Bible-readings, and meetings. Here is the happy service that Iesus asks from woman—mother. daughter, sister, mistress, maid, this is real religion -to keep the temper sweet, and to fill the words with gentleness, and to move about the home making it purer and brighter and happier by her coming, carrying the sunshine of a cheerful love to fill all its chambers and gladden all the hearts therein.

And from you, too, boys and maidens—this is what Jesus asks of you, in work and play, at home and at school: little children, love one another.

Dear brethren, let us seek to bring down this service of Christ to little things, to the cup of cold This brotherly love is wanted in the words. and the ways of common every-day life. take it there. A story is told in some Annals of the Round Table, of a knight who set out to find the Holv Grail. Forth from the castle gate rode the knight, filled with his lofty purpose, having no eyes or care for the common things about him, and giving no heed to the grey-bearded beggar that lay asking alms close to his door. Forth he went, and began to do many wonderful works. His sword wrought prodigies of valour, in gloomy woods, by robbers' strongholds, in wild mountains where the dragons lav. But he never saw the holy vision, the reward of God's true knight. Then, spirit-broken, he gave up the quest as hopeless, and rode homeward wearily. He came with head hung down and eyes that looked upon the ground. 'Not for me, not for me,' he muttered, 'is the holy vision.' Then, as he came, he caught sight of the beggar that lay yet at his gates. 'Ah. now thou shalt be helped, old man,' cried the knight, 'for I must content myself with such small acts of He sprang from his horse; he laid aside spear and crested shield, and bent over the beggar tending his wounds. He bade the servants bring him bread and wine, and himself saw all his wants supplied. And lo! as he turned there floated

before him the wondrous vision—he saw the Holy Grail!

The truest and best service we can render is that which lies before us, in our way, and next to hand. To love God with all the heart—this is the first commandment. To love and help and brighten those about us every day—this is the second commandment, and completes the service.

Reader, have you found Jesus as your Saviour? If not, then for you the story has another meaning. Sore wounded, helpless, dying-Jesus comes to bind up your wounds, to lift you in the arms of His mercy, and to pay all your debt. Seek Him now as your Saviour. And if He be our Refuge, let us make Him also our Strength. That which He commands He will surely enable us to do. The devils of unkindness, of hardness, of scolding, shall be subject unto us-but only in His name. Let us exult in the glorious Captain of our salvation. hasty temper and cold selfishness, over aggravating things and aggravating people, over annoyance repeated and injury, over the failings of other folks and over our own-He ever lives to make us more than conquerors.

XI.

'A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT.'-Amos viii. 1.

HERE is a seasonable offering for our gracious Master. When the trees are yielding the year's produce, and the kindly fruits of the earth are being stored, it is a fitting thing for us to come with the gift of our summer fruits.

Taking the words apart from their connection, we may find in them a parable at once refreshing and profitable.

Yet at the outset let us remember that this can only be a thank-offering. There starts before us the figure of one of old who came bringing with him his basket of summer fruits, yet God had no respect to him or to his sacrifice. No; earth has no flowers, no fruits, that we can offer for our sins. Our hot hands wither them; our very touch spoils them. Without shedding of blood is no remission. When the Israelites came bringing their first-fruits to the Lord, they had first to offer the lamb for a sacrifice. The blood must stain the altar before the flowers can adorn it. Until that sin-offering be made, all other offerings do but cry out against us and clamour for our condemnation.

We bring our flowers to the Lord; and think: 'Yes, the clods of the earth have drunk in the dews and flourished in the sunshine, and here they yield

this beauty and this fragrance to the Giver of good gifts. But within me, alas! I bear a barren heart. The rain and sunshine of God's blessing have come and gone, but how empty is my life of any glad return! where are its fragrance and its beauty?'

We bring our summer fruits to God; and hear them say: 'The trees, the senseless trees, have put forth leaf and blossom. The months that have gone have all been turned to some account; and here now is the golden outcome of it all.' And we—ah! well may we sigh as we turn to ourselves—good resolutions lost so soon, like scattered blossoms; efforts after better things so short-lived—withered buds; the frost of our neglect and coldness killing so much that promised well; the blight of our sin upon it all!

So in a service of pomp—splendid robes, and glittering lamps, and swinging censers, and delicious music, and all the soft and exquisite charms that delight the eye and ear; one turns a moment to look within, and finds—a leper robed and crowned! The splendour mocks the poor, low, selfish life of every day. The glitter of the gold cries out against the emptiness of heart and soul. For our own consciousness of sin, as well as to meet the claims of God's righteousness, we need bring more than our Basket of Summer Fruit. Our gratitude, whatever gift it carry, can enter into the presence of the Holiest only by the precious blood of Jesus.

Yet let us always remember that the end of our Faith is Fruit. Faith in Christ is not only believing what He has promised; it is a power that transforms a man. It makes the tree good; and that means

good fruit. Faith has its roots hidden underground in the grave of our crucified and buried Lord. But the life that Faith draws thence is to come forth in the midst of men; visibly and openly there must hang the clusters of Faith's golden fruit.

Here, then, is what the Lord seeks from every one of us—fruit. A master comes to his garden. turns over leaves of pear and plum trees, and he looks along the branches of the peach-trees. look very healthy, don't they, Sir?' says the gardener, in a satisfied way. Then they pass into the orchard. 'Nice trees these, Sir,' observes the gardener,-very choice sorts, golden pippin and russet.' Then they turn to the hot-houses: 'Vines and pines look very promising,' says the gardener, smiling complacently. At last the master speaks out, half angrily, 'What in the world is the use of healthy trees, and of choice sorts, and of promising plants? I don't want green leaves and fine young wood only-I want fruit. And if you can't get it, I must find somebody that can.'

The Lord of the vineyard comes to us. He stands before us and looks underneath the leaves of our profession, searching for fruit. Good desires, good feelings, good endeavours, all our praying, all our believing—everything else counts for nothing unless there be some fruit. This is what our Master requires and seeks.

Do you remember how the Lord Jesus took His disciples into the Vineyard and told them of the Vine? The words are worth thinking over solemnly, one by one. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away. Every branch in Me. Surely

it is enough to be in Him? This is much more than profession; and much more than orthodox belief; and much more than a moral life: In Christ. Yes, but it is not enough. Privilege and position do not deliver us from the need of any good results—they make the obligation. In such a vineyard; with such a Husbandman; a branch of such a Vine, what if there be no fruit? This: Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit HE TAKETH AWAY; and every branch that beareth fruit, He cleaneth it* that it may bring forth more fruit. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit. To Him, to us, to others, fruit is to be the end and evidence of our life.

We may carry this truth yet a little further. there be no fruit, then is everything a failure. The garden itself is a garden for this. For this it was bought and walled about; for this it is dug and dressed. The gardener works and watches for this. For this the seed was sown, the tree was planted; for this, weeding and pruning and everything else has been done. For this the rains have fallen, and for this the sun has shone. The seasons have succeeded each other for this. For this, all the life of the tree has been at work; roots have grasped the earth: leaves have drunk the dew; the sap has crept up; and blossom and bud have all been for fruit. If there be no fruit, then everything is a failure—everything.

^{*} The word is the same as that which is used directly afterwards: 'Now ye are clean.' Purgeth looks so much like pruneth that some people mistake it, and seem to think that our loving Master can get fruit out of a branch by nothing but a knife.

Well may this sink solemnly down into our hearts. What are we here for? Fashioned in the image of God; endowed with reason and love and immortality; 'crowned with glory and honour'-not just to earn the week's wages, eating, sleeping, and then going forth, forgotten. We are here that the Lord may find fruit. For this we are walled about with privileges, planted in the garden of the Lord, with the dew of His blessing and the light of His countenance; if we bear no fruit, then everything is in vain. We make the cross of Christ of none effect. The Master comes seeking fruit. If He find none upon us, then is all the love of God the Father in vain; all the agony of the Blessed Saviour in vain; all the work of the Holy Spirit in vain; all the precious promises, all advantage and opportunity in vain. All this given, and yet no fruit—then is all our life an utter, awful failure.

It is good fruit that the Master seeks from us. That is much more than good works. Hypocrisy, Trembling Fear, Cold Formality—these bring up their works. Those on whom the door was shut were of these; they had no 'basket of summer fruit'; they pleaded only their good works. The Lord seeks good fruit; and that is the outcome only of the life within. No outside thing stuck on the plant, like the burden of a Christmas Tree, will pass for fruit. Fruit grows from innermost depths. curse is gone from it. There is no bondage; but a gracious yielding. Not work wrung from us; but fruit brought forth with generous freedom. From Me is thy fruit found. It can come in no other way than this-the love of Jesus flowing through us, and working ever with a sweet constraint to fruitfulness. And in this truth lies another: The basket of Fruit is the history of the life. We don't know much about the character of a man by his work. A straight-seeing eye, a skilful hand, a brisk brain, a good memory—this much we may see of him. But the real man lies away beyond the eye and hand and brain. And these outside works do not reveal him. But all that a man is—and that is the sum of all that he has been—comes out in the basket of fruit. Hidden thoughts, lurking desires, secret motives have shaped and flavoured the fruit. A bad man may turn out some good work, but a bad man can only bring forth 'corrupt fruit.'

Look well to thy basket of fruit; it is a book of Judgment. The history of all the life lies in it, No bit of angry impatience but it has stolen something of the sweetness; no harshness but it has checked the mellowing. The selfishness and pride have given the fruit a bitter flavour. Envy and indolence have blighted and dwarfed it. things that crept about have made 'the spitted specks,' and spoiled the bloom, leaving their trail upon the summer fruits. And, on the other hand, all the good of the life is brought together in this 'basket of summer fruit.' The quiet little bits of kindness have vielded this sweetness; the hidden self-denial, the silent helpfulness, the generous thought have imparted this delicious flavour. restraint wherewith you held yourself as with a bridle, the courage that wrought for good, the cheerful earnestness, and brave endurance, and sunny hope have given size and fulness to the summer fruit,

All this comes forth here to the glory and the joy of our Lord and Master.

Here is Plenty and Variety. In a basket of Summer Fruit we want peaches and plums, grapes It will never do to have all of one sort: there must be variety. Some people grow all of one kind. They have an abundance of zeal, but they forget to cultivate love. They are like the market-gardeners, who grow their fruits for other people's good-not for their own households, much less for poor neighbours. Some manage to grow a little love, but they leave out the zeal; and so it comes to be a sickly kind of thing that can smile very amiably, but it can't work and it can't endure. Some grow gravity and sedateness, but they lack joy; and so the fruit is without colour and fragrance. Some raise the goodly water-melon of temperance, but they neglect the pleasant fruit of brotherly kindness; and others, again, can cultivate the ruddy fruit of good-heartedness, but are ruined for want of that same wholesome, cooling fruit of temperance. our Master has given us a list of the fruits that He desires, and He comes seeking each of them. are nine sorts. Look at the close of the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians.

The Lord turns up the leaves of our profession, looking first for the golden fruit of *Love*. The tree is barren, the garden is empty, that grows no love. Friend, canst thou grow this goodly fruit? Love, that keeps His commandments. Love, that delights to please Him. Love, that turns aside to find its sweetest hour and its fullest joy in His Presence.

And love to the neighbour? Can we think more

kindly than we used to do; and judge more generously; and help more readily; and speak more gently? Where this fruit flourishes all else will thrive. Where this is lacking you shall show little else but ill weeds that grow apace. Be sure that there is Love in our Basket of Summer Fruit.

Then alongside of love is to lie the luscious fruit of Joy. No Basket of Fruit is complete or acceptable to our Master without this. His tender heart is grieved when men serve Him in chains like galleyslaves. He does not like to see His sheep hounded into the paths of righteousness, panting and frightened at the watch-dogs. When the woman came behind Him, 'fearing and trembling,' 'He called her round before Him, and filled her with His 'good cheer.' He is glad when we serve Him 'with gladness.' His joy overflows when our joy is full. Brother, do we grow this fruit for our gracious Master? It may sometimes be hidden under thick leaves, but is it there? Do we delight ourselves in the Lord? Surely, we who know Him cannot help growing this fruit! To come as poor and guilty ones, condemned; and then to find the loving Saviour bending over us with pardon! To take the free gift of life from that pierced hand! To put off the prison clothes, like Joseph of old, and to be arrayed in 'the best robes;' and then for Him to bring us into His banquetinghouse, while over us is the banner of His love! How can we help growing this fruit? In spite of dreary winter, and bleak winds, and bitter frosts. His sunshine woos from these dull hearts of ours the fruit of Joy.

Then comes that dainty fruit Peace. 'Peace with

God through our Lord Jesus Christ'; the quiet calm with which we rest upon the sacrifice of our Redeemer, knowing that there is no condemnation to them that are in Him. This first; but not all. Peace because the loving Father in heaven bends over us, ordering our steps, compassing us about with the arms of His mercy; controlling all things by His unerring wisdom, and with tenderest pity caring for all belonging to us-for the body and the business, as well as for the soul and the Church. And Peace, too, from over-eagerness about anything except to please our gracious Lord. Peace that comes from losing the fierceness of our desires. sitting at the Master's feet, free from trouble about 'many things.' In these times of bustle and moneyworship and furious driving in everything this Peace The tree is a shy bearer; and thereis a rare fruit. fore all the more needs careful cultivation. Let him fear who cannot bring this fruit which our Master seeks from us-Peace.

Next in the list comes Long-suffering: a fruit much harder to cultivate in some soils than others. There is the easy-going man, who can't fret about anything. Untroubled, leisurely, taking things as he finds them, and content to leave them much the same: a 'weed,' that for a time looks like Patience, grows wild there. And like wild fruits, it loses its size and flavour, and is rightly called Indolence. The quick, energetic, fiery man, who sees what to do and does it briskly, to whom dawdling is the deadliest of sins, finds it a hard thing to grow Patience. But our loving Master values the fruit according to what it costs to produce it. And since

He requires it, we must grow it. There is no refuge for any of us under excuses about being naturally quick and irritable. His grace can bring forth this fruit in every one of us; long-suffering under the Lord's dealings with us; long-suffering with slow and dull people, who can't see a point till they have rubbed their spectacles leisurely and looked a long time; long-suffering in our work, though the seed still lie buried under the ground and though winter linger into May. This good fruit must not be wanting in the basket which we bring to our Heavenly Master.

The next fruit is Gentleness. The Lord requires of His disciple that he be a gentle-man. Not by the laws of hollow etiquette, but by the bonds of Christ's love we are bound to courtesy and gentleness. How else can we be followers of the meek and lowly Jesus? Kind words and kind ways are to be marks of a Christian. Some good people grow like 'prickly pears': very nice if you can only get at them, The goodness inside is half spoiled by the outside roughness and sharpness. There is scarcely a more deplorable waste under the sun than this-to see good men undoing much of their good by want of Sweet-briar Christians—a strange com> bination of fragrance and thorns. The Master seeks this fruit in our basket, and always likes to see it plentiful—Gentleness.

Goodness is the next fruit—Large-heartedness. A fine delicious fruit it is. And not only good for its own sake, but for its effects on the garden in which it grows. There are trees that drain the cold and boggy soil, and turn it into genial ground. A wonderful tree is this good-heartedness. No garden will

flourish where it does not grow. It is a cure for mildew and for blight; it kills the insects and keeps off the troublesome birds. You may know the garden at once in which this Large-heartedness does not They would keep all, so they can grow nothing. Nothing but a few blossoms now and then at times of special services, and they come to nothing. Joy? no, they can't grow joy; that deadly blight of selfishness is over all; and that vile creeper grumbling chokes it. They are so afraid of losing what they have, and so eager to get more, that there is no peace in their garden. And so with all the other fruits. Come, brother, is this goodly fruit in the basket that we bring? Is the heart opening more generously as the months go by? Is the pursestring tied tighter? Does the clasp fit more closely, and is it harder to get the purse out than it used to be? Do we know what this meaneth: in honour preferring one another? And are we rich toward God? Don't bring the Basket of Summer Fruit if this be lacking. The rest will not be worth the having.

Then comes Faith—faithfulness. The Lord's servant must be faithful. The Christian is a true man, and a man of truth. You may rely upon him. He is particular as to his word; and particular in little things as well as great. The King must have this fruit, faithfulness: that does its duty, whether it pays or not; faithfulness that won't swerve a hair's breadth from the right, whether men smile or frown. Do not let that fruit be wanting. There is none like it for glorifying our Lord. Faithfulness that is exact in the farthings as well as in the pounds; that does

its duty behind the master's back as well as before his face; that is as careful to be just with the poor neighbour as with the rich. If that be wanting, keep the rest. The Lord will not look at them.

Meekness is another fruit. Don't spell it with a W. Not weakness. Some weak people flatter themselves that meekness and weakness are the same. Many strong people think so, too. But Meekness is one of the daintiest fruits of the Spirit. And let it be just where the Apostle's hand has placed it, by the side of Faithfulness. I see this Faithfulness stand, like Bunyan's Great Heart, with helmet and with sword; his brows knit with rather a stern look and a fire in his eyes, while his right hand grips the sword-hilt. But at his side there standeth his sweet sister Meekness, her hand laid on his shoulder, and at his ear she whispereth: 'Gently, brother, gently.'

Meekness is to decorate the other fruits in our basket. The Heavenly Master hath a great relish for it; and when all the other fruits are set out with this about them, all is very lovely in His estimation. For ornament and beauty there is nothing to compare with the adorning of a 'meek and quiet spirit.' Let us steadily cultivate this fruit.

Last in the list is *Temperance*. Not in drinking only, but in eating, too. We need a hundred Temperance Societies, instead of only one; and every true Christian is a member of them all. Temperance in money-making; Temperance in money-spending; Temperance in money-keeping. We want Temperance in talking, and Temperance in dressing. It is a wise and righteous control over oneself in reference to all the things we have to do with. This grace

may be ours if we will seek it aright. This fruit must be ours if we would be accepted of our Lord.

A Basket of Summer Fruit—matured and ripened. Do not let us live always in the blossoming stage of promise. Do not let us have no other experience than that of the cold and showery land where fruits are always green and hard for lack of sun to ripen them. Live in the light. Dwell facing the south country where is the Palace of the King. Let the all-wise Husbandman have His own way with us and we need not fail of fruitfulness.

No other gift we can offer is so acceptable to our Lord as this. There is nothing else that can glorify Him like these. His 'soul desireth the first ripe fruit.' In these He sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied. The cruel thirst of Calvary can only be assuaged by the fruits we bring. For His dear sake let us live and pray and trust and strive to give our gracious Lord this gift: a lowly token of our love to Him; the surest proof and best acknowledgment of His great love to us: 'Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.'

XII.

JACOB'S COURTSHIP AND WHAT IT DID FOR HIM.

Born when Isaac was prematurely old, we see the father only as an easy-going, peaceable, blind man, sitting in the entrance of the tent basking himself in the sun, taking no part in the management of household matters, and ignorant of much that is going on. His mother is Rebekah, of that family at Padan-aram whom we meet with more than once, and in whom there is always the same suspicious scheming—a tricky working to secure their own ends. And the son inherits a strain of this sort from his mother's family.

Jacob comes before us a quiet man, born a supplanter, seeking to make his way in the world by tripping others up. Now it is his misfortune to be brought up in a home and amidst circumstances where these worst tendencies of his character are forced as in a hot-bed. Though he had been declared by the oracle of God to be the heir to the promises, yet Jacob is set aside by his father in favour of the brother Esau; whilst the mother consoles her favourite with the assurance of his right and teaches him to watch for every chance of claiming it.

His brother Esau is a bold hunter, strong and practised with his weapons, his bow and his arrows. Jacob is a timid man dwelling in the tent; so that the only chance for his success is in scheme and stratagem. Thus he waits, plotting and watching. It never seems to occur to him, or to his mother, that if God have spoken in favour of Jacob the word can never fail. Here is religion without faith. Religion that claims the privilege and position of the heir; but instead of faith waiting for the fulfilment of the promise with quiet assurance, they must force the keeping of God's word in their own way. That strange blind thing it is that has made Esau's wrong only the forerunner of ten thousand still more horrible which have been wrought by the Church upon the world. 'Ours is the position, ours the privilegepledged to us by God; now therefore cheat, lie, slay, burn; anything is good and right that will secure our inheritance.'

Well, Jacob now has the title to the inheritance. But do you see that the way in which he has secured the title has destroyed his own fitness for the position? A king who should seek to secure a throne by bribing and flattering and lying—like James the First, that royal Jacob—should lose all his kingliness in becoming king. So here—so always, when men come in with force and fraud to help the very God of Truth to keep His word. Jacob is heir to the promises, yet he cannot realise them—does not understand them. He has no capacity within him by which to estimate them. So we have this strange sight. Here is the heir to the whole land, and yet he is a homeless fugitive. Assured by God

of possession, and yet flying for his life. Having received his father's blessing, now hurrying away from his father's house. He has received the portion of goods that falleth to him, yet there is neither best robe nor fatted calf, nor beginning to be merry; only a going forth as an outcast.

Then comes the wonderful vision of God at Bethel. Jacob awaked out of his sleep . . . and he was afraid. Frightened; not trustful, not won. Compare the conduct of Abraham and of Isaac, when God had appeared to establish His covenant with them. There Abraham builded his first altar, and henceforth wherever he pitches his tent he builds the altar and calls upon the name of the Lord. Isaac (xxvi. 24) might have anticipated the Psalmist's and sung, 'Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house: they will be alway praising Thee.' There the Lord appeared unto Isaac the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father. And he builded an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord and pitched his tent; and there his servants digged a well. That sacred spot should be his dwelling-place. To Iacob God appears with a vision more splendid and impressive than the others had seen. As if to scatter all his fear and compel his trust, he sees the troops of angels that do excel in strength coming down to encamp about him. I am with thee, and will keep thee, in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this place. Jacob does not rise to the meaning of the promise. God pledges to him the land; but all Jacob can do is to bargain with God for food to eat and clothes to wear, and for that he will pay his ten per cent.

He cannot get above a hesitating 'if' in response to that I AM and I WILL. Then he is away. We have no trace of his recognising God's presence; no hint of any communion with Him. This then is the man whose fortunes we have to follow. He to whom God has spoken such exceeding great and precious promises, goes away ready at once to sell himself a bondslave to a hard master like Laban.

Notice in passing what Jacob might have done, would have done if he had entered into the word of the Lord with Abraham's faith. Just as Eliezer the steward claimed Isaac for his master's son, so might Jacob have spoken: 'I am the heir of Abraham and of Isaac. God hath dealt bountifully with me. father hath sent me hither to seek a wife. Give me therefore Rachel thy daughter, and let me go in peace to the land of mine inheritance.' Think what evils it would have saved him from—the vexations of Laban and all those wrongs; the controversies of the wives, the disputes of the sons, and the sorrows of Joseph, and all the miseries that beset the days of his life. So it always is. He tripped up Esau and threw him and got the blessing. But he him-Clever craft and cunning had self fell lowest. wronged the old blind father and cheated the brother. But Jacob did himself the greatest wrong; and cheated himself most of all. His suspicion murdered his own trust. His cheating put out the eves of faith within him. His belief in all fair things is lost, and all that he believes in now is his own cleverness in tripping others up. Jacob the supplanter, the wrestler, the trickster.

Such is the man I want us to set before our

minds. A man without faith, because he has made himself unworthy of trust. Now what can uplift and ennoble him? What process can transform him from Jacob the deceiver to Israel the prince? If there be any possibility of generosity and self-denial and truth in him, how shall it be brought out? I think there is but one answer. To forget himself—to work hard with all his cleverness for some noble and unselfish end. To love. So comes the moral culture of courtship.

Now Jacob draws near to the old ancestral home. He sees on the mountain slopes the scattered flocks of sheep, and a well with a great stone rolled upon its mouth. Coming to the shepherds Jacob asks them if they know his kinsmen, Laban the son of Nahor.*

The shepherds tell Jacob that Laban is well, and whilst they are speaking they point to his daughter Rachel as she comes with her flock. Jacob looks up eagerly and catches sight of the fair shepherdess, as graceful in her manner as she is beautiful. At once Jacob hastens gallantly to help her, rolling away the stone and watering the flock.

There—that is the first bit of unselfish service that is recorded in Jacob's history. Many things have combined to soften his heart. The homesickness and the loneliness of the stranger; the wonder

^{*} This is in keeping with the silence of Scripture about Bethuel, the father of Laban and Rebekah, who appears but for a moment and then is heard of no more. Old Jewish tradition says that he was accidentally poisoned at the feast with which the family welcomed the arrival of Eliezer, Abraham's steward. Others suppose that he was imbecile.

of the vision and the goodness of the promise; the long journey that left him spent and wearied, these all unfitted him for any excitement. And yet another reason, I think, helped more than all else to move him. Look at the repetition in the tenth verse of those words—his mother. Surely Rebekah had often told her son of these familiar scenes. And did not that very face recall the mother? With such feelings struggling within him, and, let us suppose, in accordance with primitive simplicity, Jacob kissed Rachel.

Then he lift up his voice and wept. Not the senseless tears of a weak man, they came welling up from a softened heart—the beginning of the man's redemption from himself. Then Jacob tells Rachel of the relationship between them-how that he was Rebekah's son; and the fair cousin hastened home-Forth came Laban with true ward with the tidings. Eastern courtesy to meet the stranger, and brought him to his house and welcomed him with hearty words—"Thou art surely my bone and my flesh." And Jacob abode with him a month as friend and guest—a month in which Jacob would not be idle. Accustomed to the management of the flocks, he finds many opportunities of letting Laban see his skill-a man well worth the keeping if Laban can only get him. And the quick-eyed Laban sees very speedily that Iacob will be nothing loath to stay:sees, too, what the terms of his service will be. So at the month's end Laban makes his proposal-'Because thou art my brother shouldest thou serve me for nought?' Nobody would ever have suspected Jacob of doing that. It was not much like this

scheming, gain-loving man. What had happened? This;—Jacob had found something else beside gain, and the new love had already thrust out something of the old selfishness—Jacob loved Rachel. For a whole month there had been a ready, self-forgetting, cheerful service; hearty, thorough—the service of love. 'Tell me now, what shall thy wages be?'

And as Jacob stood up before Laban I am sure that he looked another man. His manner had lost something of its old cringe and secrecy. He looked Laban squarely in the face as he spoke. I think the very ring of his voice had a manliness and music in it that it never had before. 'I will serve thee for Rachel seven years.'

In the whole history of Jacob there is nothing else so bright and beautiful as those seven years of pure and noble love. No light and easy service was it, but a hard bondage under a hard master. forth goes Jacob day after day, glad amidst it all, for he is serving for Rachel. What though the frosts chilled and nipped him? His heart glowed with the love of fair Rachel. What of dreadful heats? For Rachel's sake he could endure the fierceness of the drought. What of the hardships and perils of the position? That which was torn of the wild beasts he brought not to his master, but he must make it good. Well, ves, it was a hardship, but what was that compared with the joy of calling Rachel And this grumbling, fault-finding Labanwhat of him? Why one glance of Rachel's eye, a passing glimpse of her, made him forget all that, and sent Jacob singing on his way. So the brave glad heart of the lover made the days fly by with such a

sunny joy that the seven years seemed but as seven days to him.

You see now why God brought this cold cunning selfish man up here. And you see the moral culture of this courtship, redeeming the man from himself. For love is that, or it is no love. Serving not for gain, not for wages, but in pure gladness, serving for another.

And follow in Jacob's after life the trace of the deep abiding love that he bare to Rachel. had not played Jacob false, and brought back all the old trickiness and gain in very self-defence, and if Jacob could have come right out of the place with the wife whom he loved so dearly, his name would have shone with an undimmed brightness. Wherever Rachel appears in the sacred story there you will find a deeper tenderness, a more lovable bit of Jacob's character. Notice it when Jacob is returning to Canaan, and he fears the coming of Esau with his armed men. Jacob lingers at the brook Jabbokthe wrestler-to wrestle with the angel of God. Listen to his pleading with the Lord. 'Deliver me I pray Thee from the hand of Esau: for I fear him lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.' Then when Jacob lifts his eyes and sees Esau coming, have you noticed how he divides the company into three parts? First he put the servants and their children. And after them came Leah and her children. Then last of all, in the place of greatest safety and furthest from the enemy, came Rachel with her son Joseph.

The death of Rachel leaves Jacob all his life-time a mourner. With her dies all the brightness of his life. Only less ennobling, only less uplifting than pure love itself is the memory of such love—for the grief of which we are capable is but the inverse measure of our love. Henceforth Jacob speaks with a sigh, and it was to commemorate the helpfulness of that life and love that Jacob called Rachel's Benoni his own Benjamin. The son of her sorrow; but the son of his strength.

But more touching, more tender, more beautiful than all else is that little incident on the patriarch's death-bed. The old man has before him the two sons of Joseph; he is blessing them. In the midst of it his mind turns abruptly to himself. As for me. But all there is a blank save that one treasured memory—one great sorrow swallowed up all else—"As for me, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way when there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem."

And now, dear friends, let us get these two or three lessons into our hearts. That our Heavenly Father is seeking to lead us along the way where we shall best be-trained and developed and shaped as we need. We talk about 'making a living.' God sees that our living is making us. This is what our life is given for, and this is what our way of life means.

Arranged of God, and yet note that these times were not free from losses and troubles. The wild beast was busy on the flock, and the robber band helped themselves. The heat scorched, and the frost consumed. But look how it all helped to strengthen the nobility of Jacob's character. Every

loss cheerfully made good for Rachel's sake was a gain wrought into Jacob's self. He made less of 'a living,' but that loss made his living better. Every trouble and annoyance bravely borne for Rachel was another blow at the old selfishness and This is the lesson easily taught but hard meanness. to learn—believed as true enough when spoken from the pulpit: but scouted from the desk and the market-place. That getting on in life is a long way second to getting up—that is the first thing. to be humble and trustful is a thousand times better than to be rich and famous. Common-place talk! But who believes it down in the soul-who of preachers or people? Well, it is true,—that to be gentle and generous and pure-hearted, is more than being gifted and honoured. Some day we shall see it-no mere pretty truism, but a tremendous and eternal truth. It is not what we are getting, of which we should make so much ado; but what we are becoming. He of all men is the happy man who has seen the vision of God. Who knows God is his own-and having found Him, puts his whole life into the hands of the Lord, and follows on as He leads.

The shallow-hearted grumbler mutters, 'If God had cared for Jacob He would have given Rachel to him at once, and He would have kept away wild beast and robber. He would have tempered heat and cold.' Yes, we grumble blindly thus at our own annoyances and petty vexings. When shall we see it?—that it was because God cared for Jacob that He let these things come against him. He is to endure that he may overcome; and in overcoming

he is to grow up from Jacob the supplanter towards Israel the prince.

And yet once more look at the whole story. Love is strength; love is endurance. Love glories in such difficulties; they are Love's opportunity of telling out itself. And love wins thus its golden wages in pleasing the Beloved. So there is another lesson—the most blessed of all:—

If ye love Me keep My commandments.

We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

XIII.

AUTUMN CHANGES: A WORD FOR WORKERS.

'And the Angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went.'--ACTS viii. 26, 27.

THIS was Philip's new Circuit.

The persecution that followed the death of Stephen had scattered the disciples from Jerusalem, and Philip, released from his duties as Poor-steward. became an Itinerant Preacher and went down to His success was very great. Samaria. miracles were wrought amongst the people, and many of them believed on the Lord. Of the conversions there was one especially that made all the city wonder. Simon, a sorcerer, had given out that he 'himself was some great one.' They all gave heed to him from the least to the greatest, and declared that this man was 'the great power of God.' He, too, had believed, and was baptized, and had joined the company of converts. The tidings of this good work reached the ears of Peter and John, and down they came to direct it and to gather the believers into a Church. Then, said the Angel of the Lord unto Philip, 'Arise, and go toward the South, unto the way.....which is desert.'

I. Arise, and go! And if the Church at Samaria was as unbelieving as the Churches often are to-day, they said, 'What a mistake! To take Philip away just at this time! Why, he is just getting to know us so well. He suits the people so exactly too; and has been made so useful amongst us. It really is a pity that he should be sent away.'

And to Philip it must have been strange, almost harsh. He had preached to a city-full. His ministry had been owned of God in the conversion of souls. Then in the very midst of his successful work, there came Peter and John to take it altogether out of his hands, and he is sent away to the desert.

The desert—above all places! And so many neighbouring towns and out-lying villages as there were pressing him to come and tell them of Jesus, besides all Galilee. Really it seems a waste to send a man like that to such a place. How its loneliness will fret this earnest worker—away from houses and people, and with only now and then a passer-by to talk to!

This is certainly not what Philip would have chosen. So, then, the appointment of the worker needs be in wiser hands than his own.

It is not what the Church would have chosen for him. So the worker must look to a higher authority than the Church.

No; there is but one way of safety for us. It is to go to the Lord of the harvest, and put ourselves into His hands, and leave ourselves there. We don't know ourselves, what we need for our own discipline, for further usefulness, or for any other good. This sphere may be attractive; its prospects promising; the invitation a hearty one; but the worker pauses. And well he may. Who can tell what condition of affairs will come about there? Who knows what particular gifts will be needed? Who knows what temptation the worker may find there? Perhaps, a fatal friendship; a bitter quarrel; an accident that blights the life; a state of things to which the worker is ill-adapted, and so confusion and failure! The Lord knows it all. And the only safety is to let Him have His own way with us. The Angel of the Lord said, 'Arise and go.'

But our very practical age shakes its head at this, and smiles the kind of pitiful smile that is kept for people who suffer from any sort of religious weakness. 'That sounds all very well, my dear Sir; and was, no doubt, the right sort of thing in an age of miracles. But depend upon it, nowadays,—The Lord helps those that help themselves. You must keep your eyes open, and do the best you can for your own interest.' Common sense and sharpness are the Providence of the nineteenth century. And yet we profess to follow the teachings of the Book of God, in which short work is made of this self-help: 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.'

II. Arise, and go unto the way which is desert..... And he arose and went. There, in that arising and going, see the secret of the man's power. There are no 'buts'; there is no 'Nay, Lord'; no loitering; no turning aside, like Jonah. He arose and went.

God could not have used him in the city of

Samaria if there had not been this putting down of self that made him ready at a moment's notice to be off to the desert.

I watched an old man trout-fishing the other day, pulling them out one after another briskly. 'You manage it cleverly, old friend,' I said. 'I have passed a good many below who don't seem to be doing anything.' The old man lifted himself up, and stuck his rod in the ground. 'Well, you see, Sir, there be three rules for trout-fishing; and 'tis no good trying if you don't mind them. The first is, Keep yourself out of sight. And the second is, Keep yourself further out of sight. And the third is, Keep yourself further out of sight still. Then you'll do it.'

'Good for catching men, too,' I thought, as I went on my way.

There was the secret of Philip's usefulness. kept himself out of sight. He dared not go picking and choosing for himself. He is no fit worker for the Lord who does not hold one thing to be more than promising spheres of labour, more than multitudes of hearers—The will of his Master. Master said, 'Go the way that is desert.' settled it. There was no room for enquiry then. Philip arose and went. That is the only condition in which the Lord can make any use of us. He can do without us, and without our work. And the only service we can render is to obey. To Saul there comes the word of the Lord: Go, smite the Amalekites, and all that is theirs; ox and sheep, camel and But Saul spared of the best to sacrifice unto the Lord their God in Gilgal. A very thoughtful and pious arrangement, surely. No. Forth came Samuel with that dreadful enquiry: 'What meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen?' Sacrifice! 'To obey is better than sacrifice;...to hearken than the fat of rams...... The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee this day.' Obedience—utter, perfect obedience, not daring to choose or to prefer,—that is the secret of service. Isaiah puts it very beautifully: 'In the shadow of His hand hath He hid me. Here is the hidden shaft; hidden away in the Lord's hand and covered by it. What then? 'He hath made me a polished shaft'—that which flies with unerring course, having nothing to delay; nothing to deflect it.

My brother, if thou and I could go into the Storehouse of our great Lord, whence His mighty men have fetched their gifts, what should we choose? Here are splendid gifts of intellect, grasping heaven and earth with mighty thoughts; solving doubts and sweeping away objections. No. not that first. Here is eloquence with which to thrill men-now melting multitudes to tears, now sweeping as in a chariot of fire to rapturous heights. No, not that. Here is a deep knowledge of the human heart, tracing its subtlest workings, and striking with conviction at every thrust. Well, that is good, but let it wait. Here is heroism that courts peril and glories in difficulty, courage that will not give in; here is faith that never wavers, hope that is never dimmed, and charity carrying her kind heart in every look and tone and manner. No, there is something higher and better than all these. See here a cross; and nails; and a spear. There, let self be crucified, the

hands and feet nailed; the very heart thrust through. To say this; to prove this; to live this, is the gift and grace without which others do avail us little. 'I am crucified with Christ.'

III. Learn how the desert becomes our fruitful field. Philip sets out. He leaves behind him the town; and passes up from the pleasant vale of Samaria. He reaches the dreary desert. The sun pours down its fierce heat. The quivering air dances over the sandy waste. The barren rocks crop up here and there, adding to the desolateness; and withered shrubs give but a scanty shade. There is no one near him. The serpent hissing at his approach, or the lonely eagle poised far overhead, are the only signs of life.

What a place for this earnest worker!

It is all right. The Lord has sent him here; and this desert shall become his fruitful field.

Now afar off the dust rises, and a company of travellers draw near. The mounted attendants ride beside the prince who comes this way in his chariot.

And here are two things which we shall do well to imitate. Catching sight of the traveller, Philip does not rush off at once 'to talk to him about his soul.' Here, again, there is one duty higher than that. Not they that be only zealous to win souls shall shine as the stars, but they that be wise. Unzealous wisdom is too cold to be of much use; yet there is the comfort of knowing that it won't do much harm. But unwise zeal will undo some good by certain mischief. Here, again, it is the shaft that lies in the Master's hand, ready for the Master's service—wait-

ند التنا المستعدد THE RESERVE TO BE THE PARTY OF THE P = THE THE REAL PROPERTY. ME IN SINCE THE RESERVE THE THE SERVE THE REAL PORTING TO e mile or in 185 The windowed ET : THE THE PARTY The Land to the same to C - A E E E II SEE Brief · THE RE OF water are regard THE TELL SELL i me mai E TE TE TO . 7.2 75 75 THE STREET WE THE THE i is wares in cashed THE TRUE THE PERSON NAMED IN THE TO SE u sees a de P. Mar. Mar. St. S. 700 esses, and City Missionaries, and out-door services, and Sunday-schools, and Gospel addresses are all for the poor. And yet the rich are just as far from the kingdom of heaven as the poor folk are, and have more difficulty in getting there. If we did but lie more completely hidden in the Lord's hand, He would send us more frequently like winged arrows into the hearts of rich men. To Philip it was nothing who this man was, or what; the Lord had sent him; that was enough, be he rich or poor, Jew or heathen.

And Philip ran. Now the arrow is loosed from the string—the polished shaft flies to its mark. And well he might run. The opportunity would soon be lost. The chariot was speeding on its way, and a dignified loiterer would have missed it. 'The King's business requireth haste.' And that the King has sent him is enough; he need not wait until he can get an introduction, or is fit to be presented. So the simple Evangelist runs up and bursts upon the nobleman as he sits riding in his carriage, and asks him, 'Understandest thou what thou readest?' It was all right. How could it possibly be otherwise? God had sent him; and He always makes things fit in perfectly when we do but perfectly obey.

How refreshing the picture is! the man running up to the chariot and coming to the point at once. Alongside of this servant of the Lord there might hang in contrast the portrait of one befrilled and bestarched, far too stately to do a service like this; to whom etiquette is more than earnestness. Think of such an one *running*—forgetful of what is due to his position! Simplicity and earnestness are needed now as much as ever—perhaps more than ever. Let

us dwell upon the incident and pray God that we may catch something of its spirit. Here is the crest for the Lord's worker: An arrow, polished and feathered—content to lie in the quiver until the Master uses it. Lying on the string for his unerring fingers to send it forth: then going, strong, swift, sure, smiting through the heart of the King's enemies. And with this for the motto: I fly where I am sent.

IV. When God sends us on His errands He makes a way for us.

Philip found the nobleman reading the Book of the Prophet Esaias—found him just in the middle of a passage that gave the opportunity of preaching Jesus directly and fully. Perplexed and wondering, he was at the very point where Philip could step in to help him. The Lord had been at work on his heart; the gentle rain of His Spirit had softened it; the inclination and desire of his soul were toward the things of God. All was ready and waiting for Philip's teaching.

'And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.' Think, if we had been sent on this errand how we should have come along nervous and afraid as to what our reception would be. And when it all opened up so, how we should wonder at it! 'What a remarkable coincidence! What a singular Providence!' Yet is it really so very wonderful that our great Father, who sets the stars their courses, and orders the coming of the seasons with such unfailing exactness, should be able to time our affairs so as to make them fit? If the regulator

of our going were not so often pointing to 'fast' or to 'slow,' instead of keeping God's time exactly, we should wonder when things fell out otherwise.

But turn aside for a moment to see a sight worth looking at. Philip has gone into the lonely desert at the Lord's bidding—and he finds a 'chariot' to ride in, and a prince, 'of great authority,' for his travelling companion. He never had so much honour paid him in Jerusalem, or even in Samaria, as he found in the desert.

And is it not always so? Never fear when the Lord bids us go down to 'the way which is desert.' The moment we set foot in the wilderness we are the Lord's guests, and He ever keeps His table right royally furnished. He has brought the hosts of Israel up into the wilderness. 'Ye have brought us forth to kill us with hunger,' murmured foolish, doubting Israel. Ah, it was a blessed change! No more the muddy water of the Nile; but the sparkling brook, clear and full, leaping from icy depths. No more the rank vegetables and scanty crusts as of old time, but manna, delicious, abundant, and fresh every morning from the Father's hand. For forty years it never failed them once; 'they gathered every man according to his eating.' But the day they came out of the desert, that day they became their own providers. 'The manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.' Elijah has gone away into the wilderness. Fear not. He will be well cared for there. 'And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." What though there be no rain, nor dew for these

years—this man in the desert is the Lord's guest. 'And he drank of the brook.' In the wilderness once more—and, lo, an angel came to wait upon him; 'and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head.' Such food, too, is it that our gracious Lord provideth for His guests. He 'did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.' Here, again, the thousands of the people have followed Jesus into 'a desert place.' They can keep their pence. Hungry men and wearied women, sturdy lads and timid maidens, nobody shall be overlooked here. need not fear to come again, and yet again. did all eat, and were filled.' John must go forth to the desert isle of Patmos. But there he shall find his glorified Master, and the holy angels, and the visions of the eternal city, and the fulness of joy at the Lord's right hand.

There seems one exception. A solitary Figure comes wearily along the way of the wilderness, 'to be tempted of the devil'! Ah, strange and sad exception! 'Surely HE hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows'! And yet for Him, too, the wilderness and the solitary place is glad. 'Behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.'

It is true still. True for every one of us, thank God. That country towards the South hath a goodly aspect—it faceth heavenward. When the Lord bids us go the way to Gaza, it is no more *desert*; it is the garden of the Lord.

As they rode on together, Philip preached Jesus to the nobleman. And he believed and was baptized,

and 'went on his way rejoicing'—went, most likely, to open a whole country to Christianity.

For Philip's sake that sojourn in the country quiet was good after the wearing and wearying excitement of the city. For the people of Samaria it was well for Philip to go, that they might see that the great work amongst them was not of any man, but of the Lord. And for the Heavenly Master the Evangelist never did a better day's work than when he went forth at the Lord's bidding unto the way—which is desert.

XIV.

A WITHERED HAND .- ST. MARK iii. 1.

TT was in Galilee; probably in one of the many little fishing villages that skirted the lake. Here Jesus rested on the Sabbath. His fame had gone forth amongst the people, and already the crowds were passing along the streets, making their way to the Synagogue, built near the sea. We can picture the quiet waters of the lake rippling in the summer's sun, deep blue further out where the white sails dot it, and reaching away to the rugged cliffs on the other The crowd is, for the most part, such as the hardy life of a fisherman develops-sturdy, weatherbeaten fellows, brave, generous, frank; ignorant perhaps, and certainly superstitious. How different these from the dainty, white-handed visitors who were there from Jerusalem, haughty and pompous, with cunning eyes and hard faces, the lip curled into a perpetual sneer!

And what a different Sabbath it was to theirs! The simple fisherman listening to the gracious words of the Lord Jesus, and going home stirred into a deeper love and a truer life, glad and thankful; but the Pharisee listening and watching that he might find some accusation against Him. What miserable creatures are these! Let all the heart pity them.

Pity the miser whom no gain can satisfy. Pity the ambitious, every dizzy height only making him more eager to reach a further and more perilous summit. But pity most of all the religious man, who comes to hate all goodness that does not flatter him and his system. There is no hatred so cruel. Self-love is of all love the most resentful—a love untouched by all that makes love beautiful, and yet overfull of all love's jealousy and passion. To these the Holy Saviour could bring no blessing. The Lord from Heaven could not please or profit men who listened only to condemn, and who watched only that they might accuse Him.

In this crowd there stands a man with a withered The Pharisees whisper to each other of his presence. Jesus, in His quick pity, sees him, and bids him 'stand forth.' He knows the thought of these Pharisees, knows their eagerness to entrap Him. They are the rich and influential class. Think again of the courage of Jesus. Never once did the Lord Jesus check Himself because of their opposition, though He knew that opposition would end in the awful death of Calvary. The bravest Man that ever lived was our Blessed Master. And that in truest bravery: not in the hot excitement of a fierce battle; not for His own rights and His own honour; rarest courage and fairest, He, the true Knight of God, was brave to bend over an outcast leper, brave to pity and save a scorned woman, brave for a helpless beggar, brave ever for the lost and ruined. He saved others—Himself He would not save. Let our hearts adore Him. and let us exult in this glorious Lord, as brave to defend as He is mighty to save.

'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-days?' Jesus asked. The Pharisees could not answer that; they held their peace—the only wise thing recorded of them. Then at once Jesus said to the man, 'Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.'

Let us think of these words and some lessons they may teach us.

Here is a common calamity. In most of the churches of to-day it may be said, as in that synagogue of old: 'There was a man there who had a withered hand.' Here was no outcast, no publican, or sinner of the Gentiles; a child of Abraham, found in the House of God, and, so far as we know, of blameless character. The word may mean that he was a constant and regular attendant at the synagogue, whose presence might be so far depended upon that the Pharisees were able to reckon fully on finding him there. Intelligent enough and thoughtful, quite a religious man, too; but—he had a withered hand. There it hung at his side, useless. It had no brotherly grasp for any neighbour. It could never be stretched to God in prayer. No matter what he was, or what he knew, he could do nothing. Fingers contracted, wrist twisted, the helpless limb hanging at his side, or nursed by the other; he came and went -a man with a withered hand.

In that synagogue of old there was but one. In the churches of to-day there are scores.

There is the man who knows, but does nothing. One of the old Fathers has it that this man was a bricklayer, and came to Jesus begging Him to restore

the hand that he might earn his living. Poor fellow! talk to him of building. Yes, he knows all about it. He is 'well up' in all sorts of stones, and is quite a judge of timber. He thoroughly understands the matter of bricks. And as to styles, and estimates, and specifications, he is a master. Alas! with all his knowledge, there lies the trowel rusting, the bricks are but a worthless heap, the gap in the wall lies all untended, where wind and rain beat in, and time is slowly making matters hopelessly worse.

What familiar faces rise before us as we think of these—the perplexity of every earnest Preacher. They know all you can tell them. They are judges of preaching, and are eloquent as to the orators of the day; familiar with creed and doctrine, exact as to definition and order; keen in scenting any passing whiff of heresy, and severe in denouncing it. There are hosts of souls in Heaven who went there knowing less about the truth than these do. The great love of God, the wondrous life and death of the Lord Jesus, the terrors of the Judgment, the blessedness or woe of all hereafter—these are familiar things which they have heard through years. Regular, attentive, intelligent, interested, each is a man with a withered There is no taking hold of the truth, no clinging to the Saviour, no hold of faith upon the promises. A man with a withered hand.

Again, This man is a type of those good people whose usefulness is spoiled by some defect. A very good and intelligent man, no doubt; but what could they do with him? He could not guide the plough, no matter who was laid aside. He could not ply the oar, or haul at the net upon the gusty lake. A very

good man, but—he had a withered hand. In like manner, many devout, sincere people might do so much good, but for the one defect that maims all their usefulness. This man is able to give a substantial donation, but he is so crotchety or so ill-tempered, so hasty, that there is no doing anything with him: A man with a withered hand.

There is the man of so many engagements, so much business, that he can do nothing in the way of Church-work. He is striving to live right; and thinks he is perfectly excused when he says that he really has no time. For this good work and that he would do admirably, but it is useless to ask him. He may have commenced something, but it was given up; he really could not attend to it. A pushing, earnest, well-meaning man, who can work with both hands mightily for himself in the world; but in the service for the Heavenly Master—he is a man with a withered hand.

And then there is the niggardly professor. Do not say niggardly Christian, as if the two things could go together. 'How much good he might do!' thinks the Church, longing to push out here and there in new enterprises for the Saviour. But the man is maimed by his love of money, and is going down to the grave—a man with a withered hand.

Here, too, is a picture of the backslider in heart. His hand is withered. Ah! he remembers when it was very different. He looks at it twisted and useless, and thinks how in the old time he could do valiantly. Then he used to hurl the spear, or speed the arrow, with the best of them; or he could take his part on the lake and bring home his share of the

fish, as much as any man's. He looks up at this and that bit of handiwork, and then he thinks of that same hand withered and useless. Ah! it is all gone. He used to sweep the harp with ringing melody; but it has been dumb for years. Alas, the withered hand! Once, like the uplifted hand of Moses, or the grappling hand of Jacob, it had power with God and prevailed. Now it is useless. Once it could grasp a neighbour with brotherly warmth and help him heavenward. Now it is withered. Once it could seize the lion that came roaring against him, and, strong in the Lord, could rend it like a Alas, its strength is gone! Once it was an open and generous hand, 'ready' and 'glad to distribute.' Now the crooked fingers are tightly fastened, and the power to stretch it forth is lost. He moves to and fro, a man with a withered hand.

Let us anxiously enquire as to the CAUSES of this withered hand.

First and most common is disuse. The power is lost because it ceased to be used. Neglected day after day, the strength grew less and less, until the hand was withered. The worker has gone from the quieter ways of life to a more busy place. In the old time his Sunday was a busy and blessed day; and the life of the weekdays had more leisure. Now matters are reversed. The week is crowded; the week-night services elbowed out; and Sunday is a day of self-indulgent leisure. Down in the village, or in the quiet country town, his life was twice blest. In the Sunday-school, or at the sick-bed, or in other work, what blessings were gained, and what

blessings were bestowed! But here no work presented itself at once, and no work was sought, and so the weeks went by until all thought of it was forgotten; and at last the strength was gone, and he who used to be the worker comes and goes—a man with a withered hand.

Such too, most commonly, is the story of the backslider in heart. The hand is withered by disuse. The fingers have lost their cunning because they were not exercised, and they have grown stiffened. crooked, useless. A gradual evil creeping on so stealthily that the man himself may have no consciousness of its approach. Outwardly there is all that there ever was. The prayer is gone through; but the heart is slipping out of it, and there is no stirring himself to take hold of God. The Word is read; but it is with eyes that see not; there is no meditating, no searching the Scriptures. The work is done, a burdensome work gone through without desire or expectation of any good. These are the symptoms which should alarm us. The man lives in hourly peril of a withered hand.

Another common cause is multiplied anxieties and cares. Doctors assure us that, compared with former times, this disease of 'the withered hand' is increasing enormously. The overburdened, overworked brain fails beneath its load. Torn and distracted by the claims and incessant worries, at last the silver cord is loosened; the subtle machinery that connects the will and action is deranged, and at the side there hangs a withered hand. It is a calamity more terrible in the Church than in the world. The hours get so filled with the busy round of work that it is a

hard, almost impossible matter to pass out of these things into the secret Presence of the Most High. Religion comes to be one of many duties, having its place and time, rather than the life and ruler of all else. And the tyrant Care grudges the thoughts and heart even in those brief breathing-spaces wherein the worshipper goes up into the Mount of God, and following him there, reminds its slave of his miserable bondage.

Men stop and pull up sharply, even in the midst of money-making, when symptoms of paralysis appear. The business must be lessened, or others must be paid to do the work, and the man goes away to the quietness that is to remedy the mischief. When will men learn to fear the spiritual paralysis that comes more subtly, more inevitably, and the result of which is infinitely more to be dreaded?*

Another common cause of the withered hand is —contact with poisonous matters. There is the

^{*} Here is a story, from The History of Methodism in North Devon. at which men will smile as a singular instance of half-witted simplicity: 'In 1753, Mr. Roberts appears.....as a regularly-appointed Minister to the North of Devon; but soon after this he gave up the itinerant life and settled at Tiverton. For several years he carried on an extensive business; but although thus diligently employed, he devoted much of his time to preaching-often in the country villages, and generally three or four times a week in Tiverton-for upwards of thirty years...... In 1791 he retired from business, and in his old age his numerous friends showed their esteem for him by generously ministering to his comfort. About three years before his death, a gentleman in the vicinity of Tiverton, who had received much benefit from Mr. Roberts' ministry, offered to leave him the bulk of his property, which was not less than ten thousand pounds; but he declined the generous proposal, expressing his unwillingness to be burdened with the responsibility of distributing so large a sum in the decline of life.'

plumber's paralysis, and the painter's paralysis—a lead-poisoning; and there are other workers whose callings peculiarly expose them to this disease. is it with spiritual paralysis. It often comes from contact with some poisonous matter. The fingers get playing with little doubtful profits; little questionable undertakings are turned to account; the hand is reached out stealthily behind some brother's back, to take advantage of his ignorance, perhaps of his unsuspecting honesty; or the greedy grasp tightens about a gainful bargain squeezed out of some poor man's necessity. You can perhaps excuse it, defend it,-indeed, are quite indignant at having your action challenged, -noisily indignant, perhaps, to drown the secret whispers in the soul that con-Well, count up the gain; enter the demn it. balance; wipe the pen; go home to thy dinnerbut know that the poison is on the fingers, working itself into the system. Go on and find the end of it -a man with a withered hand.

And, again, there is the paralysis that comes from a poisoned atmosphere. Some questionable company or pleasure, where religion needs to be concealed. Not going far enough to do any mischief, but standing breathing the poisonous fumes, hanging about in the threshold of sinful ways; not exactly belonging to the 'set' of the ungodly, but near enough to think their thoughts and to breathe their breath,—ah, quickly there comes to be a man with a withered hand.

And now, What of the CURE? Well, the withered hand may be cured, and must

Some people like to keep defects and failings like these as a kind of claim on men's sympathy; just as beggars stir the charity of passers, by exhibit-They explain their condition with ing their sores. almost an injured tone: 'You see, my position is a peculiar one. I am obliged to be so very busy and anxious. And really one has so very little time to call one's own, and there are so many things to be seen to from morning to night; it is dreadfully unfortunate, but it does make it impossible for me to do what I used to do; and, indeed, what I should like to do still if I could manage it.' And it is all said not merely as an excuse for the withered hand, but as if we really could do nothing but pity the man to whom any other course is simply impossible. But such cases must not be met with this kind of tender consideration. It were well if some true friend would speak out plainly: 'All this, Sir, does not make the least excuse for this withered hand of yours. You are to blame for being in such a position. You have no right to allow yourself to be swallowed up in business like this.'

If a Minister talk thus, the man turns from him with just a little laugh of scorn: 'Really, Sir, you don't know anything about these matters. Would you have me give up my business?'

Well, let the Minister deliver his soul: 'Give up your business, Sir! Why, sooner than your health should suffer as your soul is suffering you would go to Madeira, the Cape, New Zealand—anywhere. Never mind what the cost would be, you would get off from "the clay," and remove into another neighbourhood. And if it were really a matter of

life and death you would even make the terrible sacrifice of giving up the business.' And is there nothing worse than death? Is it not unutterably worse to be slipping down further and further from God and the life of pleasing Him in everything? To live dying in the soul? To be growing richer and all the time getting more impatient, more irritable, more covetous; less careful or willing to help with brotherliness the sufferers about us; content with a subscription that some one else may do your work for you and earn the better half of the reward, alike here and hereafter? And all this for the sake of thriving in business!

No, this withered hand is no misfortune to be endured and to be pitied. It is a mischief and a sin.

There is but one Cure. The services of the synagogue were not enough. The solemn ritual, the round of confession and sacrifice, of singing and the Word: each of these was a help toward the healing Power, but nothing more—hands that pointed and lifted the sufferer nearer to the great Restorer. At last, before the man there stands the Living Christ, as He stands before all who seek Him. Then swiftly comes the being made whole. That Living Presence sought; that great Love appealed to; that mighty Power trusted; His word waited for, believed, obeyed. Thus may every withered hand be stretched forth, perfectly whole.

XV.

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES .- ST. MARK vi. 52.

THEY considered not the miracle of the loaves. They had taken the loaves, and enjoyed them. They had gone away satisfied in the strength of the bread. But as to how it came, and whence, they thought little of that.

And yet what a miracle it was! The crowd of six or seven thousand persons have been following Jesus during the day, until now the shades of evening begin to fall about them. Then came the disciples, saying: 'Send the people away; the day is far passed, and they have nothing to eat.' They who talked like that did not know Jesus. who talk so to-day do not know Him. The gracious Lord cares much for men's souls; but He cares for their bodies too. He teaches them many things: but He is mindful to ask, 'How many loaves have ye?' He comes bringing salvation, but He remembers that they have nothing to eat. A sermon won't do much good to the man who is perishing with hunger. The Lord will not send the people empty away. So our Blessed Master condemns that cheap religion which is content to leave a tract at a house where the inmates are famished, and to give good advice, and nothing else, to the poor fellow who is dying for want of a penny loaf. Jesus called for the little store that the disciples had, and blessed it. Then giving to each of them as much as they could take, they distributed it amongst the people, 'and they did all eat, and were filled.' But the disciples were hurrying to and fro, too busy to think about it; and the supply came so noiselessly, with such majestic ease, that they considered not the miracle of the loaves. So quietly done, and repeated so often, it almost ceased to be a miracle.

Now the people are gone. The sun is sinking behind the purple hills, when Jesus bids the disciples go to the other side of the sea while He departs · into a mountain to pray. The still waters of the lake, reddened by the sunset hues, are broken now by the splash of the oars and the rippling curves. One sees the mirrored sails, the reflected cliffs, and above, the sharp outline of the hills against the sunset glow. Over all there is the stillness, the more delicious for the bustle of the day. But now with night up springs a freshening breeze. The sail is hauled down, for the wind is contrary to them; and every hand toils at the oars. Out from the hollow valleys sweep the fierce gusts, raising the angry seas around them; and through the dreary night they toil in rowing, drenched and spent until the fourth watch. Then along the crested waves comes One walking upon the sea. In answer to their frightened cry there rings out the sweet music of the Master's voice: 'It is I; be not afraid.' And as He stepped into the boat it was as if the winds and waves knew their Lord, and lay down like living things hushed

at His bidding and crouching at His feet. And they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.

Alas! that we should be so much like them. It is only when God's power bursts upon us with a startling shock, that we marvel. The rattle of the thunder and the lightning glare will stir men into deeper thought than all the silent outburst of the spring, or even than the crowning goodness of the harvest. We are like the jailer of old, we sleep on with gross ears that cannot hear the sweet voices that sing praises to God through the still hours—it takes an earthquake to wake us. What is there wonderful in the corn, such a common thing as it is! We know all about it. The seed is dropped into the ground, and, of course, it grows. Of course, wheat comes from wheat, and barley from barley. What is there wonderful in this?

This same of course is the password of a blind eye and a hardened heart. Whence have these seeds come, unlike everything else that grows? How is it that in the cold ground this withered seed should find life; that in its grave it should be stirred by some quickening power? How is it that out of this shrivelled grain there should come this thing of beauty, swayed by the breeze, bending safely in the angrier gusts, ripening in the summer's sunshine, until it stands a field of golden corn, the world's true wealth? Is it not a miracle? A miracle of which only God 'knows all about it.' A miracle which only his love and faithfulness and omnipotence could bring to pass.

Much of this miracle will appear if we ask-How has man come by this corn? It has never been found anywhere in a wild state—a solitary exception to all things that grow. Other produce is met with first in some poor and mean condition, from which it is raised by our care into greater worth. The apple of the orchard finds its origin in the crab of the hedge. The plum of the garden has been led up by culture from the sloe. And so of every plant which is cultivated. But wheat is found only where the ground has been prepared for it, so that a knowledge of its nature must have been given with its first possession. Mythology everywhere tells of corn as coming from heaven in some strange and peculiar fashion. In Eden the man and his wife were to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But when he ate of the forbidden tree he was put down lower for his food. The ground is cursed for his sake. Food used to bend from generous branches heavy with golden fruit. Now he must bend over the ground and fetch up food in the sweat of his face. So corn is first spoken of as a strange and exceptional thing —the special gift of God to man. A standing miracle is this miracle of the loaves. Nowhere originally wild, hiding in no lower form, wheat seems to have been put into man's hand direct from the hand of God, with the needful teaching and warning: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' So this bread of life is sent down from heaven.*

^{* &#}x27;The corn-plants are utterly unknown throughout all the geological periods. Not the slightest trace or vestige of them occurs in any of the strata of the earth until we come to the most recent formations, con-

So in its continuance as in its origin, bread-corn is a standing miracle. The grass of the meadow springs up, and in dying scatters around it the seed of another crop for the cattle that sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns. The fruit of the tree drops off to the ground, and itself sows its own seed. But Where man's toil has made not so with the corn. the ground ready, where the plough has turned the furrow, and where his hand has flung the seed, there only shall come the glad shout of harvest home. Here the truth holds always: he who will not work, neither shall he eat. Such is this corn—the friend of man. whose generous life is yielded in return for care and service; but which neglected, sinks down, blighted and withered past all recovery, into the grave.

Another feature of the miracle of the loaves is this—Wherever man can settle, there corn will grow. The emigrant leaves behind him the English violet and daisy, and amidst the gorgeous splendour of other climes sighs for their quiet beauty. But this friend goes with him; and where man can make his home, there in one of its forms, his bread shall be given him. In the bleak North, where he struggles with an eternal winter, he grows his crop of oats and rye. In these more temperate climes we reap our wheat and barley. Whilst in the fierce heat of the tropics, corn flourishes as rice in the Eastern lands, and maize on the great American plains. Adapted

temporaneous with man. The testimony of geology, therefore, confirms unequivocally the testimony of Revelation, and shows that corn was not only specially created for man's use, but also got ready specially for the appointed hour of his appearance on earth.'—MAC-MILLAN'S Bible Teachings in Nature.

to every soil and every climate, this good gift goes with him wherever he can make his dwelling-place.

Its use, too, as its origin and continuance, is worth a passing thought. So peculiar, at least, that man, lacking the instinct of the lower animals in the choice of food, must certainly have let this gift perish before he could have discovered its purpose. It is said that when the Missionaries first introduced the culture of wheat into New Zealand, telling the Maories that bread came from it, the natives were much rejoiced. They waited eagerly until the corn was grown up tall and ripe, then they dug up the stalks, expecting to find bunches of crusted loaves growing at the roots. When they found nothing there but little hair-like fibres, they turned angrily upon the Missionaries and charged them with decep-It never would have entered their heads to think of taking the seeds and grinding them-a process they had never heard of-and making the fine powder into a paste with water, and then baking it—all that never could have occurred to them. There is but one way in which we can to-day account for the existence of our bread-it can only have been specially given by God to man with the knowledge of its dependence on man's toil, and of its worth as food. So does this miracle of the loaves bring us direct to our Heavenly Father, Who giveth us day by day 'our daily bread.'

Not less interesting or instructive is it to think of some of the results of this miracle of the loaves.

Wherever corn is not found, there man is a savage. Living from hand to mouth, his life is but a little

above that of the wild beasts with whom he struggles for existence-sharing with the dogs the crumbs that fall from the Master's table. But this one gift of corn compels the man to take the place for which God created him—one having dominion over the earth, to replenish and to subdue it. Corn requires a settled dwelling-place. It requires that forests be cleared; that the plains be dug; that the floods be restrained and property protected. This is the beginning of civilization. The first step in the history of a nation is the turning of the first sod and the sowing of that first handful of corn. And not only is it the origin of civilization, we might, perhaps, call it the beginning of commerce, too. sown; now the people must wait for the harvest. And this waiting means economy and foresight; it means arrangement and exchange, leading up to the higher stages of civilized life. So the corn that clothes the slopes, and that waves along the valleys. is vastly more than mere bread for a hungry people. It is the kindly hand of the Heavenly Father leading man up to his right place-home from the 'far country,' with its husks that the swine do eat, and its perishing with hunger, home again to the Father's House with 'bread enough and to spare.'

The corn-field is the lowest form in God's great school. Here all men learn the lesson of obedience to law. The Heavenly Father would have had man learn obedience on the highest form, and as a son; and for this He put him in the garden. Then came the devil's lie, about being gods—independent, himself his lord and master—and so the rebellion. Then he fell—put back, and down to this lowest form,

where he shall learn obedience as a servant. He is sent away from home and luxuries to dwell in the fields and to toil there. The condition now is— Obey or starve. The tempter cannot deceive him Desire and appetite are on the side of obedience now. Plough, till, reap-or starve. Man reaps only as he obeys. The season, the soil, the sunshine, the showers, are subject to God's laws, and before the man can eat he must learn to comply with these You may call it blind and unspiritual if you will; but, for all that, there is the alphabet which mastered shall lead him who will use it on to read deeper and higher things in God's great Books. is the first note of that harmony which makes the music of a saintly life; and so on and up to the hallelujahs of the highest heaven. So consider the miracle of the loaves. The corn, waving under the summer's sky, chequered by the shadows and the sunshine that play over it, rustling in the evening breeze, is the crown of man's obedience; the golden wages paid for doing God's will.

Here, too, God exercises the nobler virtues—brave faith and hopeful patience. To one who had never seen the processes of harvest, how mad a thing would seem the beginning of it! The sower takes the precious grain, his life and year's supply, and going into the lonely fields he just flings it away by handfuls!—flings it out into the earth. And lest any of it should be picked up, he carefully buries it under ground. Then he comes home, content to wait and watch for the next harvest; waiting, though the dark earth hold it fast in prison, though the worm be busy at the root, though frosts be keen, and floods

be frequent, and flocks of hungry birds light on it; hopeful, though there be no sign of a green leaf; confident, in spite of threatening storm and all the hundred perils, that the valleys yet shall ring with the glad shout of harvest home. I know that there may be no religion in all this. Yet it is the exercise and growth of these virtues which make up our religion—faith and trust and patience. Here we learn first lessons, beyond which none need go; but for all, the highest faith, and saving trust in God, and the fullest patience of hope are easier and stronger for the teaching of the field. Here, too, the gift is 'according to our faith.'

Give thanks, then, to the Father of Mercies. We are apt to forget our utter dependence upon Himin these times more so, perhaps, than ever. The crowded town-life swallowing at once 'the country' and the country-people; with miles of brick walls thrusting the fields further back from us every day; the daily, almost hourly, paper busying us with the affairs of the ends of the earth, and with the doings of our most troublesome neighbours,-who can find time to consider such a commonplace matter as this miracle of the loaves? We work and plan and save our gold, and think that we have much goods laid up in store; we shall not want. Yet every year we come within a little of actual and world-wide starva-A small supply is all that is left to us! And if God stay His hand, what of us and our pride and our 'goods'? In vain the gold, the ancient name, the vast estates, the heaped-up honours. down the burdens of their gold and silver before

Joseph, the Egyptians cry fiercely, 'Take these, but give us bread.' And then they come again with title-deeds and rolls of their estates, and fling them down and clamour for bread. And yet again famine grips them with her skeleton hand, and they sell themselves and stretch forth empty hands, entreating hoarsely, 'Give us bread, lest we die.' year we reach the verge of such a state of things. A very few weeks would suffice to hand us over a helpless prey to famine if God did not graciously When the harvest is safely supply our need. gathered and the golden grain is garnered, surely it is meet, right and our bounden duty to come with our glad thanksgiving to Him 'who giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth for ever.'

Such is this gift of the corn. So wonderful, that we may almost take it as the pledge of every other temporal good. Shall He not with this also 'freely give us all things?' That we may be fed to-day, think of the watchful care with which the Heavenly Father has protected this gift of corn ever since it was first entrusted to man. For thousands of years men have ploughed and sowed and reaped, for thousands of years God has controlled the winds and stayed the floods and loosened the frosts and given the sunshine, that we may have 'this day our daily bread.' So does the bread become a sacrament, the token and pledge of the care of our pitiful Father. Let us take and eat it, feeding in our hearts upon His faithfulness and power and bountiful provision, with thanksgiving.

There is yet another thought belonging to our

subject that we cannot overlook. In the miracle of the loaves he who 'considered' it at all could not fail to see much more than the bread. They saw Him Who took and blessed and brake it. So we, too, would see Jesus. He is the true Bread. Our daily bread is a beautiful emblem of Him, the living Bread from heaven.

He, too, is the special and direct Gift of God. One with us, and in all points like as we are, yet He is distinct and alone. All other good men have been brought up from an evil state. They were born in sin. The Husbandman had to watch over them, and by His care to bring them to goodness and worth. But the Lord Jesus is the holy and undefiled. Ah! never could such an One as He is have been found amongst us. He is the Bread of Life sent down from heaven; given in the Father's bounty for the world's need. And given, too, at Bethlehem—the House of Bread.

So, too, He, the living Bread, is at home with man everywhere. Wherever men can live, there Jesus seeks to dwell. No home is there but He knocks at the door, and would come in to abide. No heart in all the world but Jesus seeks to meet with it and satisfy its want. Where the bread may fail men, there He comes bearing life and every blessing. In garret and cellar; in foul dungeons; away on lonely moorland, or pent up in the crowded city; out on the tossing sea; amid the Arctic winter, or under tropical skies, everywhere He is present, the Friend and Saviour of us all.

Bread is an emblem of the Blessed Lord, again, in its worth. The want of all the world is bread.

Monarch and beggar are one in this need. Little children and old people, wise and fools, the strong and the weak, all alike must have bread. So does Jesus come to bless us all. The heart perishes with hunger until it finds Him. Wealth, position, honour, nothing can avail to satisfy us unless we have the Bread of Life. All else without Him comes to be a mockery and a burden. Thank God for this glorious abundance. In our Father's house is Bread enough and to spare. Jesus is the Food of the World.

Before the corn can bless us it must die. 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.' The Seed-corn dies to give us life. The Bread-corn is ground and beaten and broken that we may eat and live. O, blessed Lord, how shall our hearts adore Thee! For us Thou hast been beaten, scourged and broken that Thou mayest give us strength and life for evermore.

If He is the Bread of Life, how freely shall He be given. Bread is our cheapest, commonest, lowest gift. That which we cannot withhold from a hungry stranger, or most unworthy outcast. We provide the felon with his daily bread. Our charity, learning wisdom by sad experience, fears to give—but she will forget her caution when the cry is for a crust of bread. Come boldly and knock at the door of Heaven, for its best, its highest, its dearest possession. The Lord and King of Glory is held forth to us as Bread, that we may ask with confidence and take abundantly of this great gift.

XVI.

JAIRUS: A PATTERN FOR PARENTS. St. Mark v. 23, 24.

H IS little daughter is lying at the point of death. Twelve years she had been his joy, each year bringing some new charm, and leaving the promise of something fairer. But now the sunshine of her presence and the merry voice are gone. The servants creep with noiseless step, or stand in burdened helplessness. All is in vain.

And now, like many another when all else has failed, Jairus thinks of the great Prophet of Nazareth, Jesus Christ. He dwelt in Capernaum, and there He had wrought many wonderful works. Had not the nobleman gone to him about his son, and the moment the word was spoken the fever left the lad? Had they not let the palsied man down through the roof of the house, and by a look Jesus had healed him? Would He not come and save this little one? Then Jairus crept to take another look at her through his tears, and then hurried forth, thinking that delay meant death. So he set out on that search which, thank God, never need be in vain—to look for Jesus.

I. Here is the children's need. These good people

at the house of the ruler had exhausted all their own resources before they sent for Jesus. People too often do. The doctors came and prescribed the amazing compounds and superstitious follies of the times. But all was in vain. The faithful old nurse tried her specifics. Neighbours pressed their charms that had done many wonderful works. But all the magic was palmed and woven without effect; the little maiden grew worse. Then said they all that the only hope was in Jesus.

And we, dear friends, need to learn this lesson They need Jesus. We can do about the children. much, and must do what we can, but we cannot save them. The home-training may make them gentle We may set before them the daily and obedient. examples of pure love and perfect truth and brave We may set before them a lofty cheerfulness. idea of manhood, and make goodness sacred to them by the memories that they shall reverently treasure. But sooner or later we shall find out that this malady of sin is too deep for our home-made medicines. Let us learn it at once. Many good people are afraid to deal with a penitent child as they would deal with a penitent man or woman. They would recover the health of the little daughter with a kiss of peace and with gentle words of healing. This is to sin against the child, and to sin against the children's These little ones need Jesus as much as Saviour. we do. And He comes to help and to save them as much as to help and to save any. They with their sorrow for sin and their tender-heartedness cannot rest without Him. Do not tell them only to be good. Take them to Him Who is come to make

them good. Let your hope, and theirs, be only in the Lord. This power of sin is greater than you or they can break. This sickness of sin baffles all your skill. Jesus must come. He must lay His hand upon them. He must whisper His gracious forgiveness. He must take the hand and lift up the little one into the new and better life.

Then there is the example of this father. begins to enquire about Jesus. Where is He? Happy place where almost everybody could tell him where to find the Saviour. He had crossed from the other side of the lake, and was now sitting at meat with His disciples amidst a great company of people who had thronged the house. Thither Jairus makes his way, his earnestness and sorrowful face causing all to give place to him as he comes. know of his grief, and a silence settles on them all. broken only as the whispered name 'Jairus' passes from lip to lip. Hurrying on he reaches the place where Jesus is; he falls down at His feet and beseeches Him greatly: 'My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."

So there comes the next lesson—Jairus found Jesus. That is the greatest service we can do for our children—to find Jesus for ourselves. Jairus might have stayed there by the little maiden's side, watching with a breaking heart and longing that Jesus would come. He might have tended her, jealous of any other, moistening the fevered lip, cooling the aching head, tempting the appetite with proffered dainties; for love and grief do oft refine

our rugged manhood to a woman's gentleness. But all in vain. 'If she is to live I must find Jesus,' cried Jairus, springing up and hurrying forth. Then he did more than all else could do, when he found Jesus and cast himself down at the Saviour's feet.

Now, fathers and mothers, let us press this home upon our hearts. You desire nothing on earth so much as the welfare of your children; to see them good and useful and blest; to know that they shall grow up true men and women in this world, and then be citizens of the Better City. Well you, father and mother, can do more to help them than any other can do, except the gracious Master Himself. You can work hard for their education and comfort. You can put something by against the time when they will need it. You dream sometimes hopefully of what this lad or the little maiden shall come to be. But there is one thing you can do, which shall be a thousandfold greater than anything else in blessing them: Find Jesus for yourself. Cast yourself at His feet. Jairus found Jesus the little maiden soon got well. There are a hundred precepts for training children in the way in which they should go; but only one of them will count for very much. And if that be lacking, the other ninety-nine will most likely go for nothing—Go that way yourself. If we would have our children blest we must find Jesus ourselves.

Then Jairus completes the lesson for us. Having found Jesus, he keeps close to the Saviour's side. The people pressed and thronged them, but he would not let any come between them. If Jesus stopped, Jairus, eager as he was, stopped too. Ah, have we

not found how the tone and spirit of the home is ruled by our own clear vision of Jesus? Those influences that are shaping the character of the children depend upon our own walk with Jesus. A clear seeing of Jesus is a very well-spring of patience, unselfishness, hope, love, cheerfulness. If the vision be dimmed, old religious usages may be gone through with the utmost precision, but there comes a duller light, a heavier atmosphere, and all the little changes of tone and manner which children are so quick to perceive, and, alas! to imitate. Let us set it clearly before us. Our power to bless the children is in finding Jesus. Our power to keep blessing them is in our keeping close beside Him.

Again, Jairus is an example in his entreaty. He wished greatly that Jesus would come and heal the little one; but he was not content with wishing. Do not let us be. Jairus believed that Jesus could heal the little maiden; but that, instead of making him wait, sent him forth to beseech Jesus greatly. And this is the highest work of the father and mother—to fetch the needed help of the Saviour. Here is the little maiden 'at the point of death;' yonder is the Love and Power that can make her whole. All that is needed is this going to fetch Him with Jairus' earnest entreaty. Happy children are they where the father or mother, or both, become the messengers from the children's wants to the Master's fulness.

There is a danger of our drifting along content with a vague and general hope that God will bless the children some day with salvation. We need stir ourselves to more definiteness and urgency. Some time ago I was staying at a house where I found all the children not only walking in the light of God's favour, but actively engaged in work for I referred to it as a great joy and a very blessed thing. 'Yes,' said the father, 'but it is only within a short time. Some two or three years since, the thought occurred to me that my children were growing up about me, and though they were very good and moral and careful as to religious duties, vet they had not declared themselves on the Lord's side. It troubled me, and I resolved to go to Him about it in earnest.' So he fell at the Master's feet. and 'besought Him greatly.' One by one, in a quiet way, they came out boldly into professed discipleship, and gave themselves heartily to the work of the Lord. Jairus found Jesus and fell at His feet. It was the bold declaration: 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' He 'besought Him greatly.' Heaven's gate flies quickly open when we knock at it with a heart that breaks with longing. comes simply, almost naturally, this great result— Jesus went with him.

And as Jesus goes to heal the little one, let us stay to learn the precious lesson of the Saviour's love. If Jairus had known Jesus as most of us know Him, he would, perhaps, have stayed at home. As it was, it may have been the blindness and the boldness of a desperate love that led him to such an one as the Lord Jesus to heal this little sick maiden. Had he known the greatness and glory of the Son of God; had he known the sublime purpose of His coming,

would not all this have made Jairus think that He was lifted far above all thought of little children? Was not His own childhood Divine? The Creator of the world, the Lord and Judge of all men, the great Redeemer Who moved on to that dreadful death on Calvary—should any intrude upon Him about a little child that was ill? No, Jairus, He is too great, too majestic, too burdened. Do not lead Him forth from the midst of His sublime utterances, nor stay Him in His infinite work to heed your common grief.

Is it, after all, any wonder that the disciples rebuked the mothers who came with their children to Jesus? It was not harshly done, or unkindly: nor because they were lacking in love to the little ones. John, who writes with such tenderness to the 'little children,' was no stern man, to whom they were always 'in the way.' Simon Peter, to whom the Searcher of hearts gave the command to feed His lambs, had the soul that qualified him for the work. At least, it is fair to remember that the one particular miracle we find them attempting during the Master's life, was to heal an only child. Their feeling was just one of jealousy for their Lord. was contrary to their notions of His dignity. really was too much to expect of such an One that He was to stay to notice every little child. So many think, or act as if they thought, to-day,

Come with hearts that love and adore Him as we look at this blessed sight. Jesus, wearied, is sitting at meat with His disciples. He is talking in the midst of the company, words of infinite wisdom, each utterance such as never man spake. Suddenly this Jairus rushes in and falls at His feet. 'Master, my little

daughter lieth at the point of death: but come and lay Thine hand upon her, and she shall live.' That appeal goes right home to a heart full of love. What tender pity fills that Face! See, instantly He rises—most readily He comes with him. And there is Jairus, poor helpless Jairus, bringing with him the great Lord of Angels, the King of Glory, the Son of God, the World's Redeemer, going down to bless a little sick maiden.

That is possible to us—every one. We, too, in our weakness, can get this mighty Helper. testimony of this story, the testimony of that whole Life, declares that Jesus loves children. Loved them then, and therefore loves them still. Loves them. Not that He only pities a sick child or a sorrowing father who happens to cross His path. Iesus loves children—all children. The healthy, noisy, merry boys and girls as well as the pale-faced little ones. He is not simply interested in them, but He has pleasure in them. He stood watching them as they played in the market-place. It is not often that the meek and lowly Saviour was much displeased, but this is what we read of Him when they would have kept the little ones from Him. He has a delight in helping and blessing them. He looks and loves their quick response to all true love. He loves their unquestioning trust and generous devotion; their freedom from hypocrisy and deceit, and our hard To serve them is to do Him service that He shall abundantly repay. To injure the least of them is to offend Him, and to secure a terrible condemnation. Gathering the little ones beneath the safety of His loving care, He utters that solemn warning—It

were better for a man that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the depth of the sea, than that he offend one of these little ones.

Jesus is still the children's Friend; and he who comes as Jairus came, shall meet the same gracious welcome and the same loving response.

Then there is the strange yet beautiful teaching of the Hindrance—the hindrance that helped. To Jairus it must have seemed an almost cruel thing, this woman could have come an hour later; it would not make much difference to her, but it was everything to him. There Jesus stands so leisurely looking about Him and asking: 'Who touched Me?' And Jairus is looking imploringly into the Master's face, and then turning his troubled eyes over the crowd, fearful of the tidings that hope was gone. Jesus just goes on talking to the woman as if He had forgotten all about Jairus and his little daughter. Then through the crowd comes the servant and presses close up to Jairus. Ah, he knows the message before it is spoken: 'Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master!'

And on the other side stands Jesus, speaking to the woman: 'Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.' Then Jesus turns round to Jairus, as if to say: 'There, Jairus, see what faith hath done for her. Fear not: believe only, and thy daughter shall live.' So that hindrance was no thoughtless delay; much less was it a cruel indifference to the father's grief. Jesus stayed only to lift up the faith of Jairus to receive

more than he had been able to ask or to think. It is a picture that may well hang up in the chambers of our imagery, full of help and comfort. Here, in the thronging crowd, poor troubled Jairus. There, the woman who stops their way. On this side, the servant with his doleful tidings: 'Trouble not the Master.' On the other side, the blessed Lord with His authority: 'Fear not: believe only'; and pointing to the healed woman who, as she was healed, helped the faith of Jairus up to this high point,—to believe that the power of Jesus could raise the little maiden from the dead.

It is the story of all His delaying. Never is there in it any hint of indifference; any possibility of forgetting. If we will but take it rightly, the hindrance is to secure that which we long for. It is only His staying to lift us up into a greater faith that we may have a richer, greater, fuller blessing than we ever should have dared to ask.

As good old Gurnall says: 'Never was faithful prayer lost at sea. No merchant trades with such certainty as the praying saint. Some prayers, indeed, have a longer voyage than others; but then they come with the richer lading at last.'

Then quickly comes the healing. He took her by the hand and called, saying, 'Maid, arise.' Note the tenderness of His dealing. He would not have the little ones scolded into goodness. In dealing with the children the gracious Saviour can reveal all His gentleness. His words are full of meaning, and we do well to weigh them carefully. Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not. To drive them to Him is to forbid their coming. To turn their

sensitiveness into terror is to thrust them back from Him.

And He commanded to give her meat. This is our part. He gives the life, and He only; but we must minister to it, we must care for it, and that rightly. He commanded to give her meat, not medicine. Let us beware how we make religion distasteful to the little ones. Religion is not meant to be only a physic for sick souls; it is a pleasant food for the whole-milk for these little ones, and strong meat for the elders. We are every one of us to please his neighbour unto edification-not to scold even him into goodness; much more are we to deal tenderly and pleasantly with these little ones. Dreary services prolonged so as to be a weariness to the flesh of us staid and very proper adults, is a cruelty to the children, whom God has made full of restless happy Close rooms where light is never seen for the righteous, nor any joy comes for the most upright in heart; hard lessons in long words that poor little heads are not big enough to carry; bare forms without backs, where little tired legs hang unable to rest on the floor; teachings without pleasant tones; sermons without a story,—without even a smile, all this is not food but physic, and very disagreeable physic too. He commanded to give her meat. the family prayers be made a pleasure to the children, not a penance. A reading verse by verse, or the psalms read alternately as in the church service; a cheerful hymn, prayers in which their wants are remembered, phrases set to catch their thoughts and to bear them up to God, this is to give the little

ones meat. And it is to feed them with 'food convenient,' to give them 'angels' food,' when out of our conscious gladness in the Lord we set before them the kindliest aspects of God's Fatherliness, the tenderness and ready help of the blessed Saviour, the patience and power of that Holy Spirit Who dwells within them. Give them *meat*, not medicine; encouragement, not scolding.

XVII.

'STORMY WIND FULFILLING HIS WORD!-PSALM cxlviii. 8.

Hark! the giant Wind his anthem sings: Earth, tremble and rejoice! And listen; Ocean far away has caught the lofty key; He is thundering through his fathomless depths majestic psalmody; His seething waves are mad with bliss; they rise in glory crown'd, Then sink into the grand abyss with reverence profound. E. TATHAM.

THE Psalmist is gathering his choir together for the last rapturous burst of praise. The sweet voices that sing the higher notes lead off:

'Praise ye Him, all His angels: Praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon: Praise Him, ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens: ye waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord.'

Then comes the rugged bass thundering:

'Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire and hail, snow and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling His word.'

Blending high and low, next comes the ringing tenor:

'Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

Both young men and maidens, old men and children:

Let them praise the name of the Lord:

For His name alone is excellent; His glory, above the earth and heaven.'

As now the bleak winter sweeps round us once more, let us think of it—Stormy Wind fulfilling His Word.

These bass singers of David's are a wild and lawless set. Dragons and all deeps! fire and hail! snow and vapour! venomous beasts and bitterest blasts! thickest November fogs!—can these praise God?

It is a pleasant thing to think of the dragons taking their part in the choir. Fierce, poisonous, a terror to men, it is good to know that God can get some music out of them. So the things in nature that seem only to hurt and to destroy have their high purpose. 'Of Him, and through Him, and to Him,' are all these things also. In that great and glorious song which St. John heard from every creature that is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, the very dragons shall join.

And what a tribute to His power and grace that the Blessed Lord can tame the dragons for His service; that He can make the snow and vapour sing of His goodness; and can control the stormy winds exactly to fulfil His word! That crabbed ill-tempered people, and cold sullen souls, and the haughty and blustering can be touched by His grace, tuned to His praise, and be made to swell the eternal rapture round about the throne! Here is hope for every one. They who could never take their place amongst the angels and the hosts that sing in heavenly heights shall find room. Praise the Lord from the

earth, ye dragons and all deeps. And more than that—here is hope for everything within us. The fierce and fiery things, the wild and restless;—all that is within us shall come to bless His Holy Name.

Thus heaven's music comes from strange places—like the earth's; for that, too, is born of stormy winds and fires and deeps. There are the pine-trees, swept and tossed by the storms, that howl angrily about the branches, and roar in the gloomy depths—the winds are teaching the woods to sing. Far underground, deep in the dripping darkness, lie the metals, rent with the thunder of the blast, broken and crushed, fused and beaten. And now comes the din of the factory—noise, confusion, dust. At last the work is done, and the organ is set up to the glory of God. And now filled with the breath of heaven, it peals forth its music, soft and low, as if an angel sang; then thundering, mighty, majestic, leading a thousand voices in the praises of the Most High.

'Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord.' And you and I, my brother—let us not be put to shame by dragons. 'Praise ye the Lord.'

No wonder that David should make room for *The Stormy Wind* in this choir of his. It is God's great organ. What else is there so grand? To stand upon the rugged coast on some wild day when all the winds are loosed, and to watch the great crested breakers driven on before the storm; to see them dashed upon the rocks with thunder, flinging the showers of spray far up the cliffs, whilst the angry blast roars out its triumph. Then the fierce winds

go sweeping up the rocky heights and on across the plain. They roar and rattle round the sleeping city, moaning here and there at door and window,—then all furious again they fly roaring up the bleak hill-side.

And is not this a purpose of the Stormy Wind? To stir the depths of the soul. To move us to awe. The voices of the storm are majesty, grandeur, sub-They put us in possession of heights and depths within ourselves that were untouched before —feelings at once lowlier and loftier. So life's dead levels get broken in upon, and the poetry that God has put into the dullest soul is awakened by the sweep of the storm. There are voices within us that answer to the call and cries of Nature; as if the son knew the language of his Father's hired servants and loved to hear them tell forth the glory of their Master. Deep calleth unto deep. He has some defect in his nature—stone-blindness, stone-deafness—who does not see and hear God in the storm. wind and fire and earthquake are the coursers of the King, harnessed to his chariot. When they pass by, go forth and stand upon the mount with wrapped face and bent head, listening for His voice; for they bring Him in His majesty to speak to us. So is it still as in Eden of old, we hear 'the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the wind * of the day.'

And so is the Stormy Wind not only God's great organ, it is His organist too; bringing out of us, and of the earth, the sublimest music with which we can adore Him.

Stormy Wind fulfilling His Word. What a law-

^{*} Marginal rendering.

less thing it seems, this Stormy Wind! It 'bloweth where it listeth.' What hand can guide its course? Who shall control its speed? The very emblem of liberty—free as the winds, a wild, abandoned, perfect freedom. Here comes the South Wind-sweet and sportive as a little child: playing with the leaves, dallying with the flowers, whispering its secrets in the shade of the trees. Then comes the moaning West Wind, fretting tearfully. At once the little child becomes the blustering man, as with shrill whistle they pipe together; and then forth on their stormy course, tossing the branches, scattering the leaves and chasing them, leaving the flowers beaten and broken—the fickle wind! Or there comes the giant from the North, with winter in his breath, cold and biting—the wind that knits us hardy Englishmen together, so they say, and makes us what we are. And, in turn, there blows the East Wind—a withered witch, muttering spells that blight whatever they light upon; of whom sweet Charity herself can but keep a kindly silence.

But our Blessed Lord is their Master. The pierced Hand controls their going. The word that looseth them, that guideth, that stayeth, drops from His lips; and He hath spoken His Fear not to our hearts. Turn again to that scene in which the Lord reveals His mastery of these stormy winds. Loosed on a sudden, they leapt forth and rushed with roar and tumult down the hollow places to the sea. They woke it instantly in rage; and the waves flung up their heads and hissed. Then stormy winds and angry billows burst upon the little craft. All was confusion and peril—flapping sails, creaking timbers,

Then

ti we The same and the same only चन्न क्षेत्र के क्यां क्षाणाष्ट्रीतः The die at the out चे स्टा<u>च्या स्टाट</u> गाव namer of Man this is es estate refere them in This is ंध्य च च्याचे क मं The programmest Samuel Familie े कर प्रथम है जिस्स THE SUL ME े के आ के कार्य कार्य ंच ंच च्याचाः **शामवंड** Process Section Street and the last the The sale we ें अपना में माना inumerable.

pity. O the swiftness of the love with which He comes to help us! O the blessed safety of His deliverance!

Some years ago I had gone out one evening with a fisherman for a night on the deep. It was towards the end of August; and as we drifted out of the harbour with the tide, nothing could be more beautiful. Behind us the sun was setting, all gold and crimson. Under the wooded hills lay the little town with its canopy of blue smoke. The brown sails of the fishing-boats and the rigging of the larger ships were perfectly reflected in the glassy water, so still that there was not a ripple to break it. But about one in the morning up sprang a breeze, and by the time we had got well off the land it freshened to a gale. There was nothing for it but to run straight before the wind to the nearest harbour that we could make-some fifty miles away. On we flew over tremendous seas, with now and then unpleasant tokens of what our fate might be. About eight next morning the little harbour hove in sight; there were the piers, with just a winding narrow channel between them, and on them a crowd that watched us eagerly, with shouts and signals. Onward we swept, past the waves that tumbled and broke on the rocks to right and left of us; and then, in a moment, that blessed calm! We breathed again in safety, and gave God I had seen that little place many times before, and had put it down as hopelessly dull and dreary—a muddy harbour, an uninteresting people, an unromantic coast. But that day I knew no other place that could compare with it. I blessed the rocky walls of the little port. I loved each villager of the place; and lying there with the quiet waters rippling about the boat, whilst outside there boomed the thunder of the waves, and overhead the storm raged furiously, it seemed the perfection of beauty. The stormy winds had revealed its worth. He who has not been tossed by stormy winds has never seen the might of his Lord's power; has not found in all its fulness how blessed is the haven of the Saviour's love.

The Stormy Wind fulfils His word in working out the deliverance of His people. See how in the old times, when the Lord fought for Israel against the cruel Pharaoh, the stormy winds wrought out their 'The Lord brought an east wind upon deliverance. the land all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.... Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste.... And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea: there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.' And yet, again, in that grandest display of power—the last blow that God struck at the proud defiance of Egypt. A strange, almost a cruel thing it must have seemed to Israel to be hemmed in by such a host of dangers. In front the wild sea defving them; on either hand the rocky heights cutting off all hope of escape; the night of hurricane gathering over them. It was as if that first deliverance had come only to hand them over to more certain death. Completing the terror there rang out the cry: The Egyptians are upon us! They were trapped for the foe.

Then came the glorious triumph. Forth swept the stormy winds and beat back the waves. the host of Israel marched forward, down into the path of the great deep, a way arched over as if with God's protecting love. On either hand were the crystal walls glowing in the light of the glory of the Lord; and high above them swept the thunder of the Behind them came the furious foe, blinded by the darkness, dazed with the lightnings, the chariot-wheels dragging heavily, the host panicstricken, the leaders irresolute. So on through all that night. And as at dawn of the next day the last of Israel's host set foot upon the other shore, the work of the Stormy Wind was done. The mighty Hands that held up the waters let them go, and down they swept from their heights, leaping and surging in their strength, dashed together in glorious thunder, and flinging their triumph up to heaven. Egyptian, horse and chariot, rolled beneath the floods. Then sang Israel unto the Lord the song of the Stormy Wind fulfilling His Word:

'With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap.... The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil.... Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters?

One day, by God's great mercy, we too shall stand upon the sea of glass, having the harps of God and having gotten the victory: then shall we sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: 'Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints.' We shall know then how the Stormy Winds have wrought out our deliverance. Now you see only the mystery of this great sorrow; then you shall see how the threatening enemy was swept away in the wild night of fear and grief. Now you look only on the loss; then you shall see how it struck at the evil that had begun to rivet its fetters upon you. Now you shrink from the howling winds and muttering thunders; then you shall see how they beat back the waters of destruction and opened up your way to the goodly land of promise.

Again, the Stormy Wind helps us Heavenward. He is but an apprentice and no master in the art who has not learnt that every wind that blows is fair for heaven. The only thing that helps nobody, is a dead calm. North or South, East or West, it matters not, every wind may help towards that blessed port. Seek one thing only; then have no fear of stormy winds. Keep well out to sea. Let our prayer be that which I heard once from the lips of an old Cornishman: 'O Lord, send us out to sea—out in the deep water. Here we are in so close upon the rocks that the first bit of a breeze with the devil and we are all knocked to pieces. Lord, send us out to sea—out in the deep water, where we shall have room enough to get a glorious victory. Amen.'

XVIII.

THE FLIGHT IN THE WINTER: A TALK FOR A COLD DAY.

ST. MATTHEW xxiv. 20

HAVE you noticed how strangely these words break in upon the story of the coming destruction?

The chapter is full of woe and terror. The hosts of warriors gather about the city in such strength as to cut off all hope of deliverance. They burst upon the place with such suddenness that the labourer must not turn back for his coat; nor must he upon the house-top come down to take anything out of The air is thick with threatening his house. Every frightened comer brings the tidings rumours. of some later evil. Fanatics rise up with wild cries and dreadful prophesyings. Famine and pestilence heap up their unburied dead in the streets. misery of the besieged breaks out in fierce quarrels amongst themselves. Hatred, betrayal, murder, lurk in every street, and track every man's steps. Completing the horrors, come fire and earthquake. Heaven is hidden by the smoke, as if all hope were blotted out; and earth itself flings off, as a thing intolerable, the city that had been once so fair, shattering temple and palace, and leaving not one stone upon another. Then, in amongst all this terror we find this exquisite

bit of tenderness: Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

There it stands. Just as sometimes, away on the wild North coast, where fierce winds have howled and swept about the cliffs, and far down below the great seas have broken in thunder, flinging showers of spray half up the rocky height, one comes suddenly upon some little bit of shelter, where only the noise of the storm was heard; and there, amidst all the fury and terribleness, grows some dainty fern or delicate little flower. So these words come in here: an exquisite little bit of love blooming in the face of all these horrors.

And it is as we pass on from these awful predictions. and come upon the gentle tenderness of these words, that we learn their first lesson: Prayer is our Refuge. -The feeling of the disciples must have been one of bewildered helplessness. They had gone out to the Mount of Olives. In the shade of the trees, all decked with the beauty of the later spring-time, they sat in the pleasant stillness, looking upon the scene that stretched beneath them. There was the city rising up sharp and clear out of the deep shaded valleys,---the walls, the busy gateways, the rocky roads, and, most prominent of all, the Temple-buildings, 'beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole They look upon the gilded roof, dazzling in the sunlight; upon the marble porticoes and fretted pinnacles. They watch the crowds that pass up and down the broad steps and along the busy Nearer, there is the peaceful beauty of the flocks, and the lilies of the field arrayed in all their loveliness. And was all this to be turned into a

desolation? Before their very eyes, was all this to perish—this Holy Place of the Most High? House and wall and gateway-should there be nothing left? And these thousands of people-was there no eye to pity them: no arm to save? So there must have fallen upon them a crushing sense of helplessness. What could they do? What help or comfort was there for them anywhere? Then comes in the word, Pray ye. God reigns. He sitteth on the floods, for ever abiding and unmoved. All else must fail. All other confidence is swept away. Every other hope is destroyed. Reason is bewildered. Courage avails nothing. Preparation is useless. Where can they turn? Ah, the Father's arms are opened; and, like little, helpless, frightened children, they are to fly to Him and hide in His bosom! He only is sure. He only can shelter us. Pray ye.

And is not this one great purpose of prayerone of its chief meanings, and very much of its blessedness? It is an escape. A refuge from the burst of calamities; from the dreaded future; from threatenings and uncertainties. Like the bird that just rises with the beat of the storm, and wings itself swiftly away to the clefts of the rock in which it hides; so the soul flies home upon the blast to her Refuge—God. There are times in every life when everything seems tottering to its fall. Nothing is fixed; nothing sure; and every new thought brings only another possibility of ill. Times of political crisis, and of commercial panic; times of overwhelming grief. Hopes are all gone! Ruin-utter, blank, helpless ruin, stares us in the face. The sick, faint heart sees only desolation everywhere, past all avoidance, past all remedy. Then, blessed is the man who knows what it is to hide himself in God: to come out of the toss of the storm, and to rest in this: 'Thou art; Thou art God; Thou art my God! Above all, the Almighty! In all, the Kind and Loving! Through all, the All-wise!' O, the great calm that comes then, as if the Lord had spoken His 'Peace, be still!' Holding the Father's hand, one can venture to look out into the future, knowing that all shall be well. Then forth upon the gloomy night glisten ten thousand silver stars that look down Heaven's kindliness upon us. Come life or death; come loss or sorrow; come all the heaped-up evils that our fears have whispered, yet God is our Refuge and Strength, a very present Help in trouble, Therefore will not we fear.

But this is only one side of Prayer, though a blessed side. These words bring out further, The Sphere of Prayer.—All these evils must come. They are foreseen and foretold by Him to Whom all the future is open and clear as day. How sharply defined it is before the Lord! The man in the field, lifting his head from his work to catch sight of the advancing army, and tarrying not to take his coat from the hedge. The man on the house-top, startled by the glittering helmets, and flying down the outdoor steps at once to the mountains. One after another the troops of evils march past Him, until the uttermost letter is fulfilled. And to it all He sets His seal: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away. So it is all decreed. What is the use of prayer, then? Why waste your breath? Can our entreaty change the counsels of the Most High? Can the wish of weak man reverse the word of the Almighty? Yet here are the words of the Lord: Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. Let us be quite sure that there is always room for prayer. It is never useless. arranged and fixed as things may be, yet there is always a sphere in which prayer may work. 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me,' prayed the Lord Jesus. It was not possible. The cup must be drained to the dregs. But was prayer therefore There appeared an angel from Heaven, strengthening Him. Paul besought the Lord thrice: vet the thorn in the flesh must remain. Was the beseeching, then, all in vain? No. Down came the answer, not in words only, but in sweet comfort, and with a mighty inwrought power: ' $M\gamma$ grace is sufficient for thee.'

So let us ever come to the Throne of Grace 'with boldness.' So thick do Heaven's mercies fly that the arrow of prayer can never be shot aright without bringing down some blessing. If it bring not that which we seek, it shall bring us that which we need. Never can the pitcher of prayer be let down into God's deep well of love and come up empty. dreaded sorrow is not averted; but the prayer is These terrible things must come, not unheard. as terrible things must come to us all: Sorrow, Temptation, Sickness, Death. But, in the midst of them all, Praver has its sphere. Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter. It is all fixed, all certain; vet prayer can determine the time, and strip the terrors of some rigorous harshness. See, here the feeblest child of God; and there the Roman hosts; the fire and earthquake; the pestilence and famine. What is he against all these? Ah, kneeling before God that feeblest child can change the whole order of the siege, and shift it to the summer-time in spite of the proud Emperor and all his legions! With us still it is ever as with Moses of old. He had prayed, 'I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.' No; that cannot be. The request is denied. And so the prayer failed? No; it cannot fail: The Lord Jehovah said, 'I will make all My goodness to pass before thee.' Be sure of that. Though He deny the request, He shall reveal His goodness. If He hide from us that which we seek, yet He shall certainly come down and stand with us upon the mount; and shall proclaim Himself, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Again, these words teach us to pray, because God is the absolute Lord of His forces.

The Roman armies gather. The stalwart soldiers are ready to set out for Palestine. The huge battering-rams—all the siege artillery is prepared, The Roman eagles that had led the unvanquished legions glisten in the sun. The proud Masters of the world go forth for a conquest more notable than any in the splendid annals of the Roman power. The plans are settled. The siege is timed, and all arrangements are fixed. In winter, when torrents are swollen, when escape is more difficult, when hunger and want will do their work more speedily, then will they come against the

city. But in Jerusalem a little company prays that the flight be not in the winter. What then of counsels and plans; of marching legions and of crowded ships. The Roman host are His servants, and must wait upon His will. Up springs some baffling wind that sends the ships back to the harbour, and they are delayed; then permitted, perhaps, to creep forth again, only to find some fierce autumnal tempest that drives them home more sharply and detains them for repairs. And so, not till the winter is past and the spring-time is advanced, can the Roman host go forth in concentrated force against the Holy City.

The truth is plain enough; and yet we are very slow to grasp it, and to hold on to it, in all its blessedness and security. No matter what threatens, pray ve, because God is the absolute Lord of all His forces. War, famine, pestilence, all His scourges, are completely subject to our Father's will in every-When His coursers seem to rush most uncontrolled. His bit is in their mouths, and at a word from Him they stop. He guides them, never erring. This is true of sorrow, of loss, of pain—true of all things that can come against us. They can only do His bidding perfectly; never coming short, never overstepping the mark He sets them. The raging waves that lift their heads in their pride and sweep onward with flowing manes, arched and majestic, so wild, so free, so lawless, breaking with rapturous shout of thunder-His Hand appoints each one its bound, and as if they saw their Lord, they come creeping to the line that He hath set them, not daring to go one hair's-breadth beyond.

Come, brother, triumph in the glorious power of thy God. Think again of all these dreadful things: the swarms of murderous foes, nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom; gaunt famine, with skeleton hands, heaping up her prey; pestilence, hideous and hungry for its victims; 'earthquakes in divers places.' These mysterious evils must needs come; but thy Father is their Lord. He can check, He can stay them. He controls their every movement. There is room for prayer. Do not let the greatness of the threatening, or the terribleness of the foes, affright us into silence. cleansing fires never rage beyond His control. Only as He permitted could the enemy of Job stretch out his hand against him, and that hand can be thrust back by the Lord at any moment. Pain, loss, grief, all possible evils, are the servants of our Father, and can never shut out the cry of His child. Prav ve.

Here is another thought that we need remember in times like these which our Lord is predicting; Amidst all these great purposes and these vast agencies, no single sufferer is forgotten.

As the Lord looks He foresees the fierceness of that fight; He hears the shout of the foe, and the cries of the stricken. There is the falling city: the flames leap roaring up to Heaven. But He sees more than all this. Some poor fugitive presses through the winter rain, the scanty dress fluttering in the bleak winds. Then the pitiful Lord sighs. 'Ah!' saith He, 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.' That is God's way; not ours. We talk loftily about the great results: we applaud the masterly

command, the splendid bravery. We talk about the important issues of it all. Then we blind ourselves with brilliant illuminations that celebrate the victory. But the Lord sees more than this. He sees the ruined home, the hungry orphan, the heart-broken widow. This destruction of Jerusalem should scatter the Jews through all the nations, witnessing for God and opening a way for the Gospel. But it should bring with it bitter sufferings, which move His pity. 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.'

Take it home to your heart as a principle true in the lesser troubles of life as well as in the destruction of cities. Pain, loss, sorrow, death, come to work out some good end-fulfilling always some gracious purpose to those that love Him. neither the end nor the event can hide from the loving Lord a single want, or take from us a moment's sympathy. Whatever comes, there is in all and always this minute care over us-this unutterable tenderness, this most clear-seeing pity. throbbing pulse of chastening pain, each troubling fear that glooms the future, each leaden memory that weighs us down, each want that overtakes us -these all are watched by Him with quick sympathy, and close beside us He Himself stands with the help we need. Let this assurance of our Father's loving watchfulness over us, each by himself, with his own special want, teach us to pray with perfect confidence. He is mindful of every weakness and of every weight; He knows all the difficulties and the hindrances. Do not think that it partakes of rebellion or murmuring to pray to Him about these things. Pray as Jesus has taught us, that the trials which He sees necessary for us may not so thicken as to destroy us. His own tender pity prompts the prayer in our trouble: 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.' Surely this is the pledge that He will answer it.

Again, is not this a figure of our Heavenly Father's way of dealing with us?—The trouble has come: the need for flight, the threatening enemy. host has encamped against us. But the flight has not been in the winter. Love has laid her hand upon the trouble and softened it in some way. Somewhere Mercy has left her footprints. In something about it there has been a gleam of summer. Some little rift has shown us the blue sky overhead. some little flower has breathed its sweetness, and there has been some singing of birds. At the time it seemed all at its worst; but now you trace the tenderness that timed the flight. It was not in the winter. And so in affliction,—there always comes some token of love that greets you with its quiet whisper: It is the Lord.

And then these words are a fitting prayer for the last flight of all: 'Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.'—Not at our worst and deadest, gracious Lord, not in the winter let that last flight be. Not when all within is chilled and frozen; when dismal fears sweep around the dreary place like moaning winds; when dead leaves strew the path, and rotting stalks hang to the earth in the cold rains; when the trees stretch up their naked arms to Heaven, and the pitiless storm beats everywhere—not then, O

Lord! But take us at our best and fairest; when Thy Breath shall have renewed the garden of the soul; when the warm sunshine of Thy favour has called forth all within us to glad life; when love and joy, like fragrant flowers, breathe their sweetness everywhere; when faith grows tall and strong, and all the life is crowned with golden fruit; when gratitude can scarce restrain its singing night or day—then, in the cool of that summer day, let us hear Thee walking in the garden and calling, 'Rise up, my love, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds has come. . . . Arise, my love, and come away.'

XIX.

A CHRISTMAS STORY: A TALK TO THE CHILDREN.

AM going to tell you a Christmas story, dear children, and if I can only tell it as it should be told, you will think it one of the most beautiful and blessed that you ever heard.

It is night, dark and still. Yonder on the hilltop, where the lights are glimmering, is the little village of Bethlehem. Overhead the stars shine out with wonderful brilliance. Here in the plains the shepherds keep watch over their flocks, lest the robber bands should come upon them, as they did on Job's, or lest perchance a hungry lion or a bear should pounce upon one for supper, just as when the brave lad David kept his sheep in this The shepherds wrapt in their rough very place. sheepskins are gathered talking around their fire of sticks on this cold, frosty night. Suddenly a bright light shines about them,—the glory of the Lord; as if Heaven's gates were flung open, and all the dazzling brilliance came streaming down. were very much frightened, of course, as you and I should have been. Some of them fell to the ground, and some hid their faces in their robes. Then in that light there appeared the form of an angel, who spake so gently and tenderly that they

ceased to be afraid,—'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' Immediately there was with the angel very many others, and they sang out a joyful carol: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.' Then the singing ceased, the light died away, and the darkness was over them again.

So you see an angel preached the first Christmas sermon, and angels were the choir. I wish I could preach as bright and beautiful a sermon as that was; but I can do one thing that the angel did: I can tell you about Jesus,—how that He is come, and how you can find Him. And you can try and do the angels' part in praising Him with sweet singing.

I want you to think very much and very often of that sermon. Well might the angel come down to tell of it. To bless us and to save us all, dear children, the eternal God is born a little Babe. The almighty God Who made the worlds comes thus into our midst, a little Child, wrapped in the swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. He Who sat on His awful throne, and of Whom men were afraid, comes thus that we may know His love to us, and that we may love Him. He is born as one of us that He may take our curse and die in our stead. God comes down to earth that He may lift us up to heaven. That is the sermon of Christmas-day,—Unto you is born a Saviour, Which is Christ the Lord.

Now let us turn to the shepherds. They have heard the sermon, the glad tidings of great joy. They look on each other in wonder. 'What can this mean?' they ask; 'is Christ really come? And can He be in a manger, where the beasts are fed?' Then said one, a sort of a Greatheart amongst them, 'It is no good to stay here talking about it; let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'

Notice that, boys and maidens. The shepherds did not only hear the sermon. The angel told them about Jesus, and then they went to find Him. I have heard of a man who was once coming very late to the service, so late that as he was rushing in at the door he met the people coming out. 'What!' he cried, 'is it all done?' 'No,' said a wise old woman, 'it is all said, but it has all got to be done.' That is true of every sermon,—it has got to be done. The shepherds heard the angels, and then they said, 'Come, let us go unto Bethlehem and find Jesus.'

It is not much good for us only to hear all about Jesus. The most beautiful sermon that even an angel could preach to us would not be enough. We must find Jesus for ourselves. We must kneel down before Him and love Him, and we must trust Him as our Saviour. Let us to-day do as the shepherds did at the first Christmas, let us seek Jesus. Lift up your hearts to Him now, and ask Him to help you. Make up your mind that you will be His, that you will love and serve and please Him in everything. The shepherds would never

have found Jesus if they had done nothing more than hear the sermon.

And turn to the shepherds again. I am pretty sure that they would not be all ready to come at once. Mr. Greatheart spoke out bravely enough, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem.' And Mr. Hopeful said, 'Yes, let us go at once.' But Mr. Fearing said, 'O, but what about the sheep? only think if a lion were to come! Then I think Greatheart grasped his staff and spoke out bravely, 'Why, it is better to find Jesus than to have ten thousand sheep. Let us go now.' So the shepherds left their flocks to find Jesus.

Be quite sure of this, dear children, that to find Jesus is better than all other good. Thank God to-day for friends, and for home, and for the Christmas dinner, and for the clothes you wear. Thank God for all the joys that gladden you. But the true Christmas is in the heart, and the real merry Christmas is when we find Jesus and love Him. Put that before everything else. Flocks and herds and houses and lands, all are too little until men have found Jesus.

But Mr. Fearing spoke again very timidly, 'It is so dark, and such a difficult way. And when we get there perhaps we shall not find Him. And if we find Him very likely it won't be for us at all. Poor shepherds like we are, do you think that the glorious Lord would take any notice of us?'

Foolish Mr. Fearing, you say. Well, do not let us be like him. Do not make idle excuses. Do not think that Jesus is not come for little children, or that you are too small or too ignorant to find Him.

'Why,' cries Hopeful, 'the angel of the Lord said that we should find Him, and if he said so, I know that we shall. Come, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'

So they came. Brave Greatheart goes first up the steep rocky path, and cheery Hopeful follows close behind, the rest following one by one, Fearing coming last. They came with haste. They did not loiter along the way, for who knew what might happen,—the priests might take Him away to the holy city, or friends might move Him to a worthier place. There are a great many people who would like to find Jesus, but they don't come like the shepherds, with haste. They don't seek Him with all their hearts. They come a little way, and then give up. See here were three things, and where these three things are, none will ever fail to find Jesus. They come, they come now at once, and they come with haste.

But now as they get to the top of the steep path, I fancy that Fearing cries out again, 'Stay, you have forgotten that we are going to worship Christ the Lord. He is the King of kings, and here we are in our rough sheep skins. We are not fit to come. Let us go home and wash ourselves and anoint ourselves, and put on the best we have, and then we shall be fit to come to Him.'

I think Hopeful made answer tenderly, 'Why, Brother Fearing, the angel told us that we should find Him as a Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. We are poor, but never so poor as that; our little ones found something better

than a stable for a home and a manger for a bed. We need not fear to come to Him just as we are.' Then even Fearing stepped out quite boldly, as if he had not thought of that.

So we too, dear boys and maidens, can come to Jesus just as we are. We need not wait till we are very good and full of nice feelings. Jesus came as He did that all might come to Him just as they are. He is not come to save good people, but to save us with our evil hearts, no matter how dark and hard and cold they may be. Do not wait, wishing that we were good enough to come. Like the shepherds, let us come just as we are.

They pass along the village street, past the inn, and on to the cave that serves as a stable. They go by the lowing cattle and the kneeling camels, and there they find Mary and Joseph, and there, lying in a manger, is the little Child, the Saviour of the They had no trouble to find Him. in a stable where anybody could come in. Let us bless Him with all our hearts that He came as He did. If we had thought beforehand-Where shall He be born, the glorious Son of God and the King of kings? we should have said that it must be in a palace, with all pomp and splendour. But if Jesus had come thus, these shepherds would not have seen Him. They might have come near to the gate of the palace, and then the soldiers keeping guard would ask them what they wanted. They tell them that they would see the Infant King. 'You can't go in here without an order from the Lord Chamberlain-stand aside.' And there drives by a great man with his liveried servants. The door is flung back by the attendants, and for a moment the poor shepherds catch sight of the brilliant light within; then the door is shut. Even Greatheart and Hopeful would have to give up then, and would come back to their flocks, feeling as if He were not a Saviour born for them. But He lies here in a stable. Here is no soldier to question them. Here is no lock or bolt, scarcely a door that can be shut against them. Every one can come to Jesus now, homely shepherds or little children. So to-day let each of us think of Him as our Saviour. The angels sing on still to each one of us—'Unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.' We can come to Him; poor, little, weak, we can all come and find Him, the holy Child lying in a manger.

Then think of another thing—because He was a little Child they worshipped Him without fear. worshipped Him because He was Christ, the Lord. But they worshipped Him without fear, because He was the little Child. They were very much frightened at the thought of God. All were, until Iesus He is the Fear not of God to our hearts. You remember even in Eden, when Adam had sinned he heard the voice of God and was afraid. and hid himself. Turn and read of the people of Israel when God came down to speak to them on Sinai, how they cried out, 'Let not God speak with us, lest we die.' You will find many instances in the Old Testament where the people were very much afraid, and said, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God!' But who could be afraid of this little Child? They loved and worshipped, but nobody

was afraid, not even Fearing himself. So, dear children, God comes near to us that He may draw us near to Him. Think of Jesus as a Child, to-day. The youngest, the weakest, the most timid can come to Him without any fear. He is your Friend, your Brother, the holy Child Who is the children's Saviour. To-day come near to Jesus. He lies in the manger that we may adore and 'serve Him without fear.'

And again, Because He was a little Child they loved Him.—They must have done, for everybody loves a little child, and who could help loving this Holy Child from heaven here in the cold and dreary stable? Ah! dear children, it is very, very wonderful that God should come thus as a little Child to win the love of our cold hearts. The Bible says that 'God is in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto Himself.' Reconciling is a long word; it means this, God is in Christ Jesus, bringing the world to love Him again.

I have read a story of a proud, harsh man, who lived with an only son and a niece. But the father quarrelled with the son, and drove him forth from home. Then William, for that was his name, went into the fields to work as a common labourer, and married a labourer's daughter. This made the father more angry still, for he was very rich, and he told the niece, Dora, that if she ever spoke to the son or to his wife, she too should be driven forth from the house. The son was taken ill of a fever, and was dying. But the hard-hearted father would not visit him, or notice him in any way. He died, but the father's heart was still unmoved. Now William had left a little child called by his own name, and

Dora thought about the poor widow and the child until she could keep at home no longer. She went to the widow, and took the child into the harvestfield, and there she decked his hat with flowers and set him on a sheaf of corn. Then as the proud man came by, he saw the little child and Dora. 'You have disobeyed my orders,' he said, angrily. you shall enter my house no more.' But the little child looked at him, and it seemed as if it was his own little son of years before. 'You go,' he said; 'but I will take the child.' Then Dora went back to the widow and told her. The widow thought that this harsh man would only teach her son to hate her, and to be hard like himself; so in the evening the two women went to the farmhouse for the child. resolved to bring it away, and that they two would live and work together. As they came near to the house they saw through the window the little child upon the old man's knee, laughing and prattling, and stretching out his fat little hand after the grandfather's great gold seal that shone in the ruddy firelight. They opened the door and came in. Then the old man's proud, fierce heart burst out in 'May God forgive me, I have been to blame. Kiss me, my children.' The little child had melted the hardness, and turned all the old man's soul to He had reconciled him.

So comes this little Child Divine to melt our hard, proud hearts, and to reconcile us to God. Come, dear children, bring your tenderest, freshest, fullest love to-day for the Holy Babe that lies in the manger.

Then remember, that though He was a little

Child, the shepherds trusted Him as their Saviour. Let us worship and love Him; let us trust Him, too. This was the 'glad tidings of great joy,' a Saviour was come. His name is called Jesus because He saves His people from their sins. This little Child is come to live a life of sorrows, and then to die upon the cross for our sins. This is the only-begotten Son, Whom the Father hath sent, that 'whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' To-day let us trust Him for our salvation. He is born to be our Saviour.

And notice, too, that after the shepherds had found Jesus, 'they returned, glorifying and praising God.' They went back to their flocks. They had their work to do, and they went back to do it; but they went rejoicing that Christ was come, and praising God for what they had heard and seen. They carried Christmas with them, and the bells of their hearts were ringing for joy that Christ, the Saviour of the world, was born. So let us go home, not to forget Jesus, but to be glad in Him and for Him; loving to think of Him, and trying to praise Him with all our hearts.

There is yet another thought and feeling in your hearts to-day, dear boys and maidens,—If you had been living there, how gladly would you have made room for Him in your home. You would have waited on the blessed mother, and with what joy you would have tended the young Child. 'It is too late now,' you say. No, it is not. The true Christmas is for them only who do so wait on Jesus and minister to Him. I have heard a beautiful story of two little

fellows who were left at home alone for the day. When the dinner-time came, they were to set the cloth and to help themselves. They had been talking of Jesus.

'I wonder,' said one little lad, 'if Jesus would come if we set a knife and fork for Him and asked Him. Mother says He hears us, and loves to come and bless us when we ask Him.'

'Let us try,' cried the other, eagerly.

So they put a third chair, and a third knife and fork, and a third plate; and for their blessing they folded their hands, and asked Jesus to come to dinner with them. Then they sat and listened.

There came a very gentle knock at the door.

'You go,' said one lad, rather frightened.

'No; let us both go,' said the other.

They hastened to the door, and stretched up to the latch. They peeped out, expecting to see the blessed Jesus, with a golden crown upon His head. But there was a poor little wretched boy, blue with the cold, shivering in his rags.

They turned back disappointed. 'Only this ragged boy!' They were going to shut the door against him.

'Stop a minute,' said one. 'You know Jesus did hear us. Perhaps He couldn't come Himself, and so He sent this little boy instead. We will ask him in.'

So they brought him in, and set him in the chair, and gave him of their dinner.

And as they watched him eating, one said, 'I will tell you what I think. I think that Jesus knows about it, and He is taking it just as if we had done it to Him, and He is making us glad because we did it.'

'Yes, I think so,' cried the other, with bright eyes and happy face.

So let us try to-day to make some hearts glad, and to help those about us, and Jesus shall take it still as if we did it to the Holy Child Who was laid in the manger. He said, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto ME.'

The fierce wind howls about the hills,
Most angrily, most drearily;
The stars shine out with brilliant light,
All tremblingly, all frostily;
The bird lies sheltered in its nest,
The fox creeps to his crafty rest,
And angels watch by children blest,
All tenderly, all tenderly.

But who are these that through the night Move wearily, all drearily? 'Tis Joseph, forth from Bethlehem, All hastily, all eagerly; For Herod seeks the Child to slay, And death will come if they delay, And forth ere ever break of day, They thus must flee, to Egypt flee.

The mother screens Him at her breast,
All carefully, all prayerfully;
She feels Him shiver in the blast,
All fearfully, all tearfully;
And so along their way they go,
Now numbed by night winds as they blow,
Now starting fearful of the foe,
All helplessly, all homelessly.

Had we been there, O gracious Lord,
Most tenderly, most lovingly,
Our hands, our home, our all were given,
To comfort Thee, to shelter Thee.
And we may still—for Thou hast said,
When hungry little ones are fed,
And outcast ones find home and bed,
'Tis done to Thee, as unto Thee.

XX.

THE YEAR'S ACCOUNT.

O you remember the story that our Blessed Master told of the two servants? Each was put in charge of his lord's goods, and of the house-The one kept steadily preparing for the hold. master's return: at any moment he might come; so the place must always be in order; the servants must be waiting; provisions prepared; lights burning, that at once the lord may find welcome and fit entertainment. But the other servant begins to think, 'My lord delayeth his coming. There is time enough to prepare for that months hence. am master till he comes.' He gives himself up to eating and drinking. The place is neglected; the servants are oppressed and wronged; everything is uncared for. Then suddenly in upon the darkness and ruin bursts the lord of that servant with terrible And angrily he bids them bind that servant hand and foot, and cast him forth into the darkness. Then comes the moral of the story: Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required (St. Luke xii, 42-48).

Most of us, no doubt, have seen the pictures in which the great moralist of the pencil has traced the story of *The two apprentices*. There is the idle apprentice, wasting his master's time, and so his goods; gambling on the tombstone during church

hours; stealing his master's property; ending, of course, on the gallows. There is the other, careful, diligent, thrifty, rising to positions of honour, growing in wealth, and ending as Lord Mayor. It is a powerful lesson, and full of teaching; yet it has the defect of all such rough-and-ready divisions of men. Ten thousand may be idle without coming to the gallows. A hundred thousand may be industrious without ever standing in danger of being made Lord Mayor of London. And as for the great mass of apprentices, they are probably neither very idle nor very industrious, but manage to get on pretty well without reaching either extreme. Very different however is this story of the two stewards. It is exhaustive. It takes in every man and woman. You and I, my reader, are one or other of these. Here is a description of what we are doing. Here is a promise or warning of what shall come to us. Let us give heed to it with all the eagerness of a personal interest.

See what each had.

They were both servants. According to Eastern custom, they would be household slaves, born very likely in their master's house. They belonged to him, and, therefore, had no choice in the matter of serving. They were dependent upon him, and were bound to do his will. They lived on his food; they were sheltered by his roof; they wore his clothes; their time, their strength, their service—all they had was their master's.

Here let us begin to see ourselves. No possession that is possible amongst men can set forth the way

in which we belong to God. A son, bound to honour his father; a servant, bound to do his master's will.—these are relationships that we can understand. We require that he who is dependent upon our bounty, or who takes our wages, shall do But there is another obligation that is infinitely greater than these; so utter and complete that we can have nothing amongst us that approaches We make things for our service by transforming the already made material, or by adapting it only. Think if out of nothing we could command that which we sought; could endow it with every requirement for our service; could so fit it for this end that in our service it should find its highest being and richest condition—what a claim should we have then! This is how we stand to God. Our Lord hath so *created* us for His service. For this He has given us our being. For His service we exist, with power to think and power to love. He fits the hand for its work. He clothes the arm with His is the very life that beats in our strength. His the light we see by; the ground we tread upon, the bread we eat. Let us try and get this wrought into our hearts. Every one of us, if a father, claims his son's honour; every one of us, if a master, claims his servant's service. What, then, is the claim of our Creator, God! In Him I live and move and have my being. All that I have is His: held for His service. And for all an account shall be required.

But not only servants,—they were Stewards too. Their position was one of authority. The men-servants and women-servants took their orders from

them. It was bad enough for the youngest lad to loiter in the fields, neglecting orders and wasting property. But that was very little compared with the ill-doing of the steward. His neglect meant neglect everywhere. Wrong-bidding and wrongdoing on his part meant that all the rest went wrong. When the steward began 'to eat and drink, and be drunken,' all began to suffer. The servants were beaten; sullen and neglectful they came and went about the place. Fences were broken; fields untilled: weeds overran the gardens. Within and without, everything gave signs of the steward's neglect. So, on the other hand, when the steward did right then everything went right. When his busy feet went early over the farm, seeing each servant at his work, with careful planning for to-morrow, then all the place was prosperous. Every field, every hedge, the contented household—all told of his care.

So here again, let us see the truth concerning ourselves. Not creatures only are we, but men having dominion. Ten thousand servants are there that wait upon us every day. Ten thousand reach out hands that minister to our wants. The light and air; the sunshine, wind, and rain; the night and day; the stars in the high heaven, and the metals from dark depths; the plant and flower; root, and fruit, and tree; the beast, and bird, and fish; ten thousand services for which we depend on others' hearts and heads and hands. Let this vast responsibility sink solemnly down into our souls. A servant, yet a steward. A creature, yet a king. Made for service, yet trusted with dominion. The

man who goes astray, drags down all these with him. The man who serves God, takes with him the service of all these things and consecrates them to Him Who made them all.

Each steward had to keep account of what had been entrusted to him. The master had an exact account of what was given; and he required, by-and-by, a reckoning. He was the lord, and must know of all that was earned, and of all that was spent; of what the servants had done; of cattle and vineyards and fields. Brother, the Lord's Book has to be balanced, as well as our own. Is it made up? It is well to have it ready; He may call for it at any moment. 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.'

But there are possessions of which God asks no There is another lord and master of the world, a ruined and beggared king, who has nothing but his own undying pride and hatred. And he is ever tempting men to take. How sharp and notable a contrast is that in the beginning of man's possessions !-- 'And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.' Then into the midst of the Paradise creeps the devil, muttering,—with only a lie. He can make our mother no offer of a bribe: he is too poor. Without courage or courtesy to

pluck it for her, he can but set her on to steal her Master's fruit. So is all sin—robbing God. So is all the devil's work.

'Naboth is dead. Now, Ahab, you can arise. Go forth and take possession of the coveted vineyard. There is nobody to dispute your title. Think, too, how much good you can do with it. Send a bunch of grapes now and then to some sick man; give a tenth of it to the priest. Fear not, God's sun shall shine upon it, and the vine shall come to cheer your heart as of old it gladdened honest Naboth.' But at the gate Elijah stands; and the dreadful words are ringing in King Ahab's soul: 'Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.'

Oh! see to it that in the year's account there are no possessions like these. Gold that has a curse upon it; which no use can ever cleanse. that is not the price of honest toil, but of hard bargains, of sharp ways and ungenerous dealing, of craft and trickery; wealth that is won and kept by a cold and cruel selfishness. Heaven wants no account of what is done with all this. Ah! and money is not all. There is position won by false appearances and kept up by acted lies. There are 'gains' that leave men poor for God. There is company that makes men powerless for any good. Pleasures that grieve the gracious Spirit and drive Him forth sorrowing from the thoughts and the heart. The account is only as to what the Lord has given.

Look for a moment, too, at the ground of this responsibility. God is the great Father and Lord of

every man, loving all that His hands have made. What is given to one is given for the good of all. The very inequalities of men are to bind us in a closer brotherhood. And that in no one-sided fashion as we are too apt to think. Not only that the poor may be blessed by the bounty of the rich, but that the rich may be yet more blessed by the poverty of the poor. God ennobles us more by the wants of others than by our own gifts. How much life would lose if everywhere the strong met only with the strong! With only haughty independence on all sides, charity would find no room, and gratitude would die. It is in our contact with weakness and want that the little ways of kindness grow; and trust, that blesses twice—the trusting and the trusted. The slow and blundering people are they who enrich us—if we will—with patient tenderness and the grace to help. Let him who hath, remember that it is for his sake that there are those who have not. Divine provision and safety for the rich that the poor they have always with them. So our Heavenly Father takes this human nature and helps it upward by the wants of others, and by our wants in turn. So by the service of each other He smites at that deadly spoiler of all things fair-accursed selfishness. And so, unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.

Follow the story in the different lives of these two. At once the wise steward sets to work. 'Well,' said he, 'I know my master's will. My duty is plain. I must be ready for his coming at any time.' So the man's thoughts and daily plans and the work of those

under him, and his very pleasure—all is ordered in reference to the return of his lord. Everything must be kept at its best in readiness for him. House, servants, gardens, vineyards and fields-all must be such as to please him. The apartments must be swept and garnished; the table spread; and the porter must be watching at the door. He may come in the night-time; the lights must be burning. may come in the harvest; but no pressure of work must ever let him find the household unready. So this faithful steward lived. Not always thinking about his master's return, or always talking of it; much less wasting his time in trying to find out when it should be. He had work to do, and servants to look after, and accounts to keep. And yet that coming of his master guided and shaped his course in everything. At night he could not rest until he knew that all was ready if the master should come before the morrow's dawn. And each morning he set out, ordering all as if his lord should come that day.

But the other laughs at this faithful steward. 'The dull and gloomy fellow,' he cries, with a sneer. 'My lord is gone, and he won't be back for many a day. Some think he will never come back again. But if he does, of course I shall get some sign of his coming, and then I can set things a bit in order for him. Now I shall enjoy myself. I am my own master; and I shall do as I like!' 'My own master,' that shapes and guides all his course. He spends his time as if it were his own. He makes the servants do his pleasure. He uses his master's goods as if they belonged to himself. Heedless, and keeping no account! So he lives on.

And is there not a solemn teaching here? how every day kept its account. The faithful steward's ways and orders grew to habits. The thrift and readiness of each day accumulated in a perfect preparation. Day after day brought a care that appeared in everything-tended gardens, well-kept vineyards, skilful farming: so there came to be in all the compound interest of the duty that just keeps on doing its work. And all this told, too, upon the amount that stood to the master's credit. Then those about the faithful steward caught the same high tone of duty, and joined in the same key-note. The consciousness that all was ready spread a sense of safety and contentment through the house. that the master was coming filled them with quiet joy and made each work a glad task-the hope of their reward lay in the master's pleasure. flowers and the fruit the gardener tended might gladden and refresh the master—he should have them at their best. The servant 'swept the room,' and made 'it and the action fine' as she thought of how her lord should find it all as he would have it. It is a happy household knowing that all is right, and looking for the glad appearing of their lord.

And in the other household each day is writing its account. The story is of increasing ruin. The neglect of many yesterdays accumulate; here, too, with compound interest heaping up the account. The little that was left failing until all is beggared. And in the man's own heart each day is leaving its record. Self-indulgence growing, till he who lived to eat and drink is drunken; and he who neglected

the servants comes to oppress and beat them. It is the picture of misery. The man himself vexed, troubled, irritable; the servants sullen and careless. Fear sitting in every gloomy chamber, threatening all. No wonder the man is drunken. There is one honest voice that speaks to him at times that he must drown. 'Thou fool!' it cries, 'what if thy master should come to-night?' He starts in his sleep, dreaming that he hears his lord at the door, and gasps with horror. Day after day is going by, each leaving its record. Until now fear itself is dead. The man comes to laugh at his foolish fright. Yet every day is bringing back his lord.

Then comes the difference of the end.

An autumn evening, when all is hushed and beautiful; when the red gold of the woods climbs up to meet the ruddy glory of the sunset sky; when fruits are safely stored, and the plenty of the harvest garnered; when the labourer turns homewards with the day's work done, and they within the house trim the lamps for the night-watch; then suddenly appears the outrunner with the tidings, Behold the Lord cometh! Go ye forth to meet him. Ouickly the porter flings back the gates; and forth at once goes the faithful steward to bid his lord glad welcome. And his lord, seeing all things done according to his will, saith, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant!' And he sets that steward at his own right hand, and shares his wealth and joy with him, and makes him ruler over all that he hath.

A dreary night in winter, bleak, pitiless, with howling winds and beating rain, a night when men

creep anywhere for shelter. There sits the unfaithful steward, stupid with drink, laughing his mad laugh and cursing the wretched servants—there in the midst of the disorder, with the tokens of his mismanagement on every hand. Then on comes the forerunner. No porter watches. No lights are in the hall. None answer the summons. The master has returned:

'He cometh as a thief,
For he doth break the bars and burst the door,
.....And turn him out,
Roofless and shivering 'neath the doomstorm.'

'Take him,' saith the indignant lord,—'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into the outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

'Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching?'

Standard and Popular Works,

PUBLISHED AT THE

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE.

THEOLOGICAL.

- Arthur (W.) The Tongue of Fire; or, the True Power of Christianity. By the Rev. W. ARTHUR, M.A. Royal 32mo. Price 18.; Gilt edges, 18.4d.
- Dunn (L. R.) The Mission of the Spirit; or, the Office and Work of the Comforter in Human Redemption. By the Rev. Lewis R. Dunn, Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church, U.S. Edited by the Rev. Joseph Bush. Crown 8vo. Price 28.
- Edmondson (J.) Sermons on Important Subjects; with an Introduction by the Rev. T. JACKSON. Two Vols. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- Fletcher (J.) An Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense; or, a Rational Demonstration of Man's Corrupt and Lost Estate, By the Rev. John Fletcher, 12mo. Price 2s.
- Fletcher (J.) Five Checks to Antinomianism. By the Rev. JOHN FLETCHER. 12mo. Price 45. 6d.
- Fletcher (J.) The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher; with his Life, by the Rev. JOSEPH BENSON. Complete in Nine Volumes. 12mo. Price £1 11s. 6d.
- Geden (J. D.) Didsbury Sermons: Being Fifteen Discourses preached in the Wesleyan College Chapel, Didsbury. By John Dury Geden, Tutor in Hebrew and Classics. 8vo. Price 7s.
- Gregory (B.) The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints: Being the FERNLEY LECTURE for 1873. With Notes, and Essays on The History of Christian Fellowship, and on the Origin of 'High Church' and 'Broad Church' Theories. By the Rev. B. Gregory. 8vo. 4s.6d.
- Gregory (J. R.) An Examination of the Doctrines of Conditional Immortality and Universalism. By the Rev. J. Robinson Gregory. Crewn 8vo. Price 2s, 6d.
- Hannah (J.) Introductory Lectures on the Study of Christian Theology: with Outlines of Lectures on the Doctrines of Christianity. By the late Rev. John Hannah, D.D.; to which is prefixed a Memoir of Dr. Hannah, by the Rev. W. B. Pops, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.6d. II—80

- Horbery (M.) An Enquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Duration of Future Punishment. By MATTHEW HORBERY, B.D. Reprinted from the Edition of 1744. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Jackson (T.) The Duties of Christianity; theoretically and practically considered. By the Rev. Thomas Jackson. Second Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 4s.
- Jackson (T.) The Institutions of Christianity, exhibited in their Scriptural Character and Practical Bearing. By the Rev. THOMAS JACKSON. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.
- M'Afee (D.) The Pillar and Ground of the Truth. Twelve Sermons on the Fundamental Truths of Christianity. By the Rev. Daniel. M'Afee. With a Preface, by the Rev. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A. Crown 8vo. With Portrait. Price 6s.
- Pope (W. B.) A Compendium of Theology: Biblical, Dogmatic, Historical. By the Rev. WILLIAM B. Pope, D.D., Theological Tutor, Didsbury College. Second Edition; Revised and Enlarged, with copious General Lidex, Compiled by the Rev. G. A. Bennetts, B.A. 3 Vols., 8vo. Price £1 118. 6d.: Half Morocco, cloth sides, Price £2.
- Pope (W. B.) Discourses Chiefly on the Lordship of the Incarnate Redeemer. Delivered in the Chapel of the Wesleyan Theological Institution, Didsbury. By the Rev. W. B. Pope, D.D. Third and Enlarged Edition. Demy 8vo. Price 8s. 6d.
- Pope (W. B.) Sermons, Addresses, and Charges delivered during his year of office. By the Rev. W. B. Popg, D.D., late President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference. 8vo. Price 8s. 6d.
- Pope (W. B.) The Person of Christ: Dogmatic, Scriptural, Historical. The Fernley Lecture for 1871. With two additional Essays on the Biblical and Ecclesiastical Development of the Doctrine, and Illustrative Notes. By the Rev. W. B. Pope, D.D., Theological Tutor, Didsbury College. 8vo. Price 7s.
- Pope (W. B.) The Prayers of St. Paul. Being an Analysis and Exposition of the Devotional Portion of the Apostle's Writings. By the Rev. W. B. Pope, D.D., Theological Tutor, Didsbury College. 8vo. Price 7s.
- Prest (C.) The Witness of the Holy Spirit. By the Rev. Charles Prest. Third Edition. Crown 8vo., cloth, red edges. Price 3s.
- Randles (M.) For Ever! An Essay on Eternal Punishment. By the Rev. Marshall Randles. Third Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.
- Rigg (J. H.) Discourses and Addresses on Leading Truths of Religion and Philosophy. By James H. Rigg, D.D. Demy 8vo. Price 10s.
- Rigg (J. H.) Modern Anglican Theology. Chapters on Coleridge, Hars, Maurice, Kingsley, and Jowett: and on the doctrine of Sacrifice and Atonement. Third Edition Revised, to which is prefixed a Memoir of the late Canon Kingsley, with Personal Reminiscences. By the Rev. James H. Rigg, D.D., Principal of the Normal College, Westminster. Crown 8vo. Price 7s. 6d.

- Robinson (E. J.) How to Pray and What to Pray For.

 An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer and Christ's Introductory Sayings. By
 the Rev. EDWARD JEWITT ROBINSON. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.
- Robinson (E. J.) The Caravan and the Temple, and Songs of the Pilgrims. Psalms cxx.—cxxxiv. By the Rev. E. J. Robinson. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Robinson (E. J.) The Mother of Jesus not the Papal Mary. By the Rev. E. J. Robinson. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- Treffry (R.) Enquiry into the Doctrine of the Eternal Sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ. By the Rev. RICHARD TREFFRY, Jun. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- Unsworth (W.) The Aggressive Character of Christianity By the Rev. William Unsworth. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Waddy (S. D.) Sermons. By the late Rev. SAMUEL D. WADDY, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 4s.
- Watson (R.) Sermons and Sketches of Sermons. By the Rev. RICHARD WATSON.

Three Volumes, demy 8vo. Price 18s.

Three Volumes, post 8vo. Price 10s. 6d.

- Watson (R.) Theological Institutes; or, a View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity. By the Rev. RICHARD WATSON. Four Volumes, royal 18mo. Price 14s.
- Watson (R.) The Works of the Rev. Richard Watson. With his Memoirs, by the Rev. Thomas Jackson.

Thirteen Volumes, demy 8vo. Price £3 18s. Thirteen Volumes, post 8vo. Price £2 5s. 6d.

Wesley (J.) Fifty-three Sermons by the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

These Sermons, and Mr. Wesley's Notes on the New Testament constitute the Standard Doctrines of the Methodist Connexion.

Wesley (J.) Sermons on Several Occasions. By the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Complete edition, containing One Hundred and Fortyone Sermons, and a Life of the Author by the Rev. John Bercham, D.D.

Three Vols., crown 8vo. Price 7s. 6d.
Fine Edition, three Vols., crown 8vo. Price 10s. 6d.
Library Edition, three Vols., demy 8vo. Price 18s.

Wesley (J.) The Prose Works of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. Edited by the Rev. Thomas Jackson. This Edition contains all the Latest Corrections of the Author; and includes the Life of Mr. Wesley by the Rev. John Вевсиам, D.D.

Library Edition, Fourteen Volumes, demy 8vo. Price £4 4s. Cheap Edition, Fourteen Volumes, post 8vo. Price £2 2s.

Wiseman (L. H.) Christ in the Wilderness; or, Practical Views of our Lord's Temptation. By the Rev. Luke H. WISEMAN, M.A. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

COMMENTARIES, DICTIONARIES, &c., ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

- Aids to Daily Meditation: being Practical Reflections and Observations on a Passage of Scripture for each Day in the Year. Crown 8vo., cloth. Price 3s. 6d.
- The Holy Bible: with Notes, Critical, Explanatory, and Practical. By the Rev. Joseph Benson. With Maps and a Portrait of the Author. Six Volumes, Imperial 8vo., cloth, red edges. Price £3 3s.
- A Biblical and Theological Dictionary: Illustrative of the Old and New Testaments. By the Rev. John Farrar. With Four Maps and Ninety-six Engravings. Cloth, red edges. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- An Ecclesiastical Dictionary: Explanatory of the History, Antiquities, Heresies, Sects, and Religious Denominations of the Christian Church. By the Rev. JOHN FARRAR. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.
- Helps to the Study of the Bible, containing Analytical Notes, and Summaries of the several books; Historical, Chronological, and Geographical Tables; List of Animals, Birds, Reptiles, Plants, &c., found in Scripture; Tables of Weights, Measures, and Time; Words Obsolete or Ambiguous; together with a new Index to the Bible, Cruden's Concordance, a Dictionary of Scripture Proper Names, and a series of Maps. Foolscap 8vo. Cloth, red edges. Price 2s.
 - Cheap Edition, smaller type. 16mo. Stiff Covers. Price 1s.
- The Proper Names of the Bible; their Orthography, Pronunciation, and Signification. With a brief Account of the Principal Persons, and a Description of the principal Places. By the Rev. John FARRAR. 18mo. Price 1s. 6d.
- A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; containing copious Notes, Theological, Historical, and Critical; with Improvements and Reflections. By the Rev. JOSEPH SUTCLIFFE, M.A. Imperial 8vo., cloth, marbled edges. Price 12s. 6d.
- The Synoptical Dictionary of Scripture Parallels and References; being an Index of the Texts of Scripture Classified; forming a Methodical Summary of the Principles. Doctrines, Precepts, and Facts of Scripture. Foolscap 8vo. Cloth, red edges. Price 3s. 6d.
- A Biblical and Theological Dictionary: Explanatory of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Jews, and neighbouring Nations. With an Account of the most remarkable Places mentioned in Sacred Scripture; an Exposition of the principal Doctrines of Christianity; and Notices of Jewish and Christian Sects and Heresies. By the Rev. RICHARD WATSON. Royal 8vo., cloth. red edges. Price 128. 6d.
- An Exposition of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, and of some other detached parts of Scripture. By the Rev. RICHARD WATSON, Demy 8vo., Price 6s.; 12mo., Price 3s. 6d.

The New Testament, with Explanatory Notes. By the Rev. John Wesley, With the Author's last Corrections.

Pocket Edition. 18mo. Price 2s.
Large-Type Edition. 8vo. Price 4s.
Library Edition, fine paper. Demy 8vo. Price 6s.

- The Prophet of Sorrow; or, the Life and Times of Jeremiah. By the Rev. THORNLEY SMITH. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- The Holy Child Jesus; or, the early Life of Christ: viewed in connection with the History, Chronology, and Archæology of the Times. By the Rev. THORNLEY SMITH. Foolscap 8vo. Price 18. 6d.
- An Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. By the Rev. Henry W. Williams, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews. By the Rev. Henry W. Williams, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- Scripture compared with Scripture. A Plan for Daily Bible Reading throughout the Year. Arranged by E. G. C. Price 4d. Limp cloth, gilt edges, 6d.

BIOGRAPHICAL.

- Asbury (Francis), The Pioneer Bishop: Life and Times of. By W. P. STRICKLAND. Royal 32mo. Price 18.; Gilt edges, 18. 4d.
- Alpine Missionary (The); or, the Life of J. L. Rostan, Missionary Pastor in France, Switzerland, and the Channel Isles. By the Rev. MATTHEW LELIEVRE. Translated from the French Edition, by 4the Rev. A. J. FRENCH, B.A. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.
- Ball (H.) Memorials of Miss Hannah Ball, of High Wycombe. The first Methodist Sunday School Teacher. Foolscap 8vo. Price 1s. 6d.
- Bamford (J.) The Disciple among the Poor: Memorials of Mr. John Bamford, of Shardlow. By his Son, the Rev. John M. Bamford. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. With Photographic Portrait, 3s. 6d.
- Bramwell (W.) The Christian Minister in Earnest. A Memoir of the Rev. William Bramwell; containing Extracts from his Correspondence, and a Delineation of his Personal and Ministerial Character. By the Rev. Thomas Harris. With a Portrait. Royal 18mo., gilt edges. Price 3s. Cheap Edition. Royal 3mo. Price 1s.
- Bumby (J. H.) The Life of the Rev. John H. Bumby. With a brief History of the Progress of the Wesleyan Mission in New Zealand. By the Rev. Alfred Barrett. With a Portrait. 12mo. Price 35.
- Bunting (William M.), Memorials of. Being Selections from his Sermons, Letters, and Poems. Edited by the Rev. G. STRINGER ROWE. With a Biographical Introduction by Thomas Percival Bunting. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

- Carvosso (W.) Memoirs of William Carvosso. Written by himself, and edited by his Son. With a Portrait. Royal 18mo. Gilt edges. Price 25. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 15.
- Clarke (A.) The Life of Dr. Adam Clarke. By the Rev. Dr. ETHERIDGE, With a Portrait. Post 8vo. Price 3s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s. 6d.
- Coke (T.) The Life of Thomas Coke. By the Rev. Dr. ETHERIDGE, With a Portrait. Post 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.

 Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s. 6d.
- Collins (T.) The Life of the Rev. Thomas Collins. By the Rev. Samuel Colley, Fifth Edition, with Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.6d.
- Cryer (M.) Holy Living Exemplified in the Life of Mrs.

 MARY CRYER, of Manaargoody, South India. By the Rev. ALFRED BARRETT.

 Royal 3amo. Price 1s.; gilt-edges 1s. 4d.
- Royal 32mo. Price 1s.; gilt-edges 1s. 4d.

 Dixon (J.) The Life of James Dixon, D.D., Wesleyan

 Minister. Written by his Son, RICHARD WATSON DIXON, M.A., Minor
 Canon in Carlisle Cathedral Church. With three Portraits of Dr. DIXON,
 and a Vignette of his Birthplace. Crown 8vo. Price 7s. 6d.
- Dixon (T.) The Earnest Methodist. A Memoir of the late Mr. Thomas Dixon, of Grantham. By his Nephew, the Rev. Joseph Dixon. Foolscap 8vo. With Portrait. Price 2s.
- Entwisle (J.) Memoir of the Rev. Joseph Entwisle: with copious Extracts from his Journals and Correspondence, and Occasional Notices of Contemporary Events in the History of Methodism. By his Son. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Father Reeves, the Methodist Class Leader. By EDWARD CORDEROV. 18mo. Price 15.
- Fletcher (J.) The Life of the Rev. John Fletcher. By the Rev. Joseph Benson. With a Portrait. 12mo. Price 3s. 6d.

 Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s.
- Fletcher (Mrs.) The Life of Mrs. Fletcher. By the Rev. Henry Moore. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s.
- George (E.) Memoirs of Elizabeth George. By the Rev. Henry J. Piggott, B.A. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.
- Grimshaw (W.), Incumbent of Haworth. By the Rev. R. SPENCE HARDY. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Hall (S. R.) Life of the Rev. Samuel Romilly Hall. By the Rev. Thomas Nightingale. Crown 8vo. With Portrait. Price 25. 6d.
- Hessel (Eliza.) True Womanhood; or, Memorials of Miss Eliza Hessel. By the Rev. Joshua Priestley. Crown 8vo. With Portrait. Price 2s. 6d.; gilt edges, 3s.
- Hunt (J.) The Life of John Hunt, Missionary to the Cannibals in Fiji. By the Rev. George Stringer Rows. Foolscap 8vo. With Portrait and other Illustrations. Price 2s. 6d.: limp cloth, 2s. 6d.

- Jackson (T.) Lives of Early Methodist Preachers. Chiefly written by themselves. Edited, with an Introductory Essay, by the Rev. Thomas Jackson. Library Edition, Six Vols. Crown 8vo. Price 15s. Cheap Edition, Six Vols. Foolscap 8vo. Price 9s.
- Jackson (T.) Recollections of My Own Life and Times. By Thomas Jackson. Edited by the Rev. B. Frankland, B.A. With an Introduction and Postscript by G. Osborn, D.D. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Lockwood (A.) Little Abe: or, the Bishop of Berry Brow.

 Being the Life of Abraham Lockwood, a quaint and popular Local Preacher
 in the Methodist New Connexion. By F. Jewell. Crown 8vo. Cloth,
 gilt edges. With Portrait. Price 2s. 6d.
- M'Owan (P.) A Man of God; or, Providence and Grace
 Exemplified in a Memoir of the Rev. Peter M'Owan. By the Rev. John
 M'Owan. Crown 8vo. Price 5s.
- Miller (W. E.) Life of the Rev. W. E. Miller. By the Rev. Dr. Dixon. Foolscap 8vo. Price 2s.; limp cloth, 1s. 6d.
- Nelson (J.) The Journal of Mr. John Nelson. Royal 18mo. Price 18. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 10d.
- Newton (R.) 'The Life of the Rev. Robert Newton, D.D.

 By the Rev. Thomas Jackson. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

 Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s. 6d.
- Ouseley (Gideon.) The Life of Gideon Ouseley. By the Rev. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A. Eighth thousand. Crown 8vo., with Portrait. Price 3s. 6d.
- Powell (Walter.) The Thorough Business Man. Memoir of Walter Powell, Merchant, London and Melbourne. By the Rev. B. Gregory. Seventh Edition. Crown 8vo., with Portrait. Price 3s. 6d.
- Priestley (M. A.) Memorials of Mary Anne Priestley,
 Wife of the Rev. Joshua Priestley. By her Husband. Foolscap 8vo.
 With Portrait. Limp cloth, Price 1s. 3d.; cloth, gilt-lettered, Price 1s. 6d.
- Richardson (C.) The Peasant Preacher: Memoir of Mr. Charles Richardson. By the Rev. J. E. Coulson. Royal 32mo. Price 18.; Gilt edges, 18.4d.
- Rogers (Mrs.) The Experience and Spiritual Letters of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers. 18mo. Gilt edges. Price 1s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1od.
- Rogers (Mrs.) The Experience, Letters, and Journal of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers. Royal 18mo. Gilt edges. Price 3s. 6d.
- Shaw (Barnabas.) The Story of his Life and Labours in South Africa. By the Rev. WILLIAM MOISTER. Crown 8vo. Portrait and Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d.
- Shaw (W.) Memorials of the Life and Labours of the Rev. WILLIAM SHAW, late General Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missions in South Africa. By his oldest surviving Friend. Crown 8vo. With Portrait. Price 6s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Crown 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.

- Shaw (Mrs.) Long Life and Peace: Memorials of Mrs.

 ELIZABETH SHAW, of St. Austell. By the Rev. ROSERT C. BARRATT.

 Foolscap 8vo. Price 3s.
- Shillington (T. A.) Christian Thoroughness: A Memorial Sketch of Thomas Averell Shillington, J.P., of Portadown. By the Rev. John Dwyer, Author of 'Christian Work for Geatle Hands,' &c. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Shrewsbury (J. B.) Christ Glorified in the Life, Experience, and Character of Joseph B. Shrewsbury (late Medical Student, and Wesleyan Local Preacher, of Bradford, Yorkshire). Written by his Father. Royal 32mo. Price 18.; Gilt edges, 18. 4d.
- Smith (J.) Memoirs of the Life, Character, and Labours of the Rev. John Smith. By the Rev. R. Trepper, Jun. With an Introductory Essay by the Rev. Dr. Dixon. Royal 18mo. Gilt edges. Price 3s. Cheap Edition, without the Introductory Essay. Price 1s.
- Stoner (D.) Memoirs of the Rev. David Stoner. By the Rev. Dr. Hannah and Mr. William Dawson. With a Portrait. Royal 18mo. Gilt edges. Price 2s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s.
- Taylor (M. C.) Memoir of the Rev. Michael C. Taylor.
 With Extracts from his Correspondence. By the Rev. B, Hellier. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Threlfall (W.) Memorials of the Rev. W. Threlfall. By the Rev. SAMUEL BROADBENT. 18mo. With Portrait. Price 1s. 6d.
- Toase (W.) Memorials of the Rev. William Toase.

 Compiled by a Friend. With an Introduction by the Rev. WILLIAM
 ARTHUR, M.A. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Treffry (R.) Memoirs of the Rev. R. Treffry, Jun. With Select Remains, consisting of Sketches of Sermons, Essays, and Poetry. By his Father, the Rev. RICHARD TREFFRY. With a Portrait, 12mo, Price 4s. 6d.
- Tucker (Mrs. J.) Memoir of Mrs. Jane Tucker, wife of the Rev. Charles Tucker, some time Missionary to Hasbai and Tonga. By Mrs. G. F. White. Edited by the Rev. H. W. Williams, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 2s. 6d.
- Turner, James; or, How to Reach the Masses. By E. M'HARDIE. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Vasey (T.) The Life of the Rev. Thomas Vasey. By his Widow. Crown 8vo. With Portrait. Price 2s. 6d.
- Waddy (S. D.) The Life of the Rev. Samuel D. Waddy, D.D. By his Youngest Daughter. Crown 8vo., with Two Portraits. Price 3s.

- Watson (R.) Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Rev. Richard Watson. By the Rev. Thomas Jackson. With a Portrait. Royal 18mo. Price 3s. 6d. 8vo. Price 6s.
- Wesley (C.) The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley.
 Comprising a Review of his Poetry; Sketches of the Rise and Progress of
 Methodism; with Notices of Contemporary Events and Characters. By the
 Rev. Thomas Jackson. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Wesley (C.) The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, With Selections from his Correspondence and Poetry, and an Introduction by the Rev. THOMAS JACKSON. Two Vols. Royal 18mo. Price 7s.
- Wesley (J.) The Life of the Rev. John Wesley. By the Rev. Richard Watson. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d. Cheap Edition. Royal 32mo. Price 1s. 4d.
- Wesley (J.) His Life and his Work. By the Rev. M.
 LELIEVER. Translated by the Rev. A. J. FRENCH. With a Portrait. Crown
 8vo. Price 35.
- Wesley (J.) The Living Wesley, as he was in his Youth and in his Prime. By the Rev. James H. Rigg, D.D., Principal of the Wesleyan Training College, Westminster. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Wesley (J.) The Father of Methodism: A Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. By Mrs. Cosslett. Second Edition, enlarged. Foolscap 8vo. Forty-five Illustrations. Price 1s. 6d.
- Wesley (J.) The Journals of the Rev. John Wesley. Four Vols. Crown 8vo. Price 10s.
- West (F. A.) Memorials of the Rev. Francis A. West. Being a Selection from his Sermons and Lectures. With a Biographical Sketch by one of his Sons, and Personal Recollections by the Rev. B. GREGORY. Crown 8vo. Price 4s.
- Wharton (H.) The Story of the Life and Missionary Labours of the Rev. Henry Wharton in the West Indies, the Gold Coast, and Ashanti. By the Rev. W. Moister. Crown 8vo. With Portrait and Illustrations. Price 3s. 6d.
- Wood (J.) The Life of the Rev. Joseph Wood. With Extracts from his Diary. By the Rev. H. W. WILLIAMS. With a Portrait. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- The Methodist Family Library of Standard Biographical and other Works, designed to promote Spiritual Life. Twenty-one Volumes. Royal 32mo. Price 22s.; or in Handsome Box, 29s. Gilt edges, 29s.; or in Handsome Box, 36s. 6d.
- Wesley's (Rev. John and Charles) Poetical Works: A
 New and Complete Edition. Reprinted from the Originals, with the last
 corrections of the Authors; together with the Poems of CHARLES
 WESLEY not before published. Collected and Arranged by the Rev.
 George Osborn, D.D. Thirteen Volumes. Crown 8vo. Half Morocco,
 gilt edges. Price £3 188.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

Elliott (C.) Delineation of Roman Catholicism, drawn from the Authentic and Acknowledged Standards of the Church of Rome; in which her peculiar Doctrines, Morals, and Usages are Stated, Treated at Large, and Confuted. By the Rev. Charles Elliott, D.D. New Edition, with a Supplement; being an Exposition of certain changes which the Papacy has undergone during the Pontificate of Pius IX. By WILLIAM HARRIS RULE, D.D. Price 128. 6d.; Half-bound in Morocco, 178. 6d.

The Supplement is sold separately. Price 2s. 6d.

- Rule (W. H.) History of the Inquisition, from its Establishment in the Twelfth to its Extinction in the Nineteenth Century. By the Rev. W. H. Rule, D.D. Third Edition, with a new chapter on "Walling Up." Two Vols. 8vo. With Illustrations. Price 158.
- Rule (W. H.) Martyrs of the Reformation: a History of Martyrdoms, Confessions, and Sufferings, from the Dawn of the Reformation to the Nineteenth Century. By the Rev. W. H. RULE, D.D. 8vo. Price 8s.
- Robinson (E. J.) The Mother of Jesus not the Papal Mary. By the Rev. E. J. ROBINSON. Crown 8vo. Price 6s.
- Authentic Report of the Discussion held in Rome on the Evenings of February 9th and 10th, 1872, between Catholic Priests and Evangelical Ministers, concerning the Coming of St. Peter to Rome. Translated by the Rev. WILLIAM ARTHUR, M.A. Paper covers, Crown 8vo., Price 6d.; Cloth, Price 18.

METHODISM.

- Williams (H. W.) The Constitution and Polity of Wesleyan Methodism. Being a Digest of its Laws and Institutions. Brought down to the Conference of 1880. By the Rev. Henry W. Williams, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Pierce (Wm.) Ecclesiastical Principles and Polity of the Wesleyan Methodists. Comprising a Complete Compendium of their Laws and Regulations, from 1774 to 1872. Revised by the Rev. Dr. Jobson. Royal 8vo., Price 155.; Half Morocco, Price 20s.
- Christophers (S. W.) Class Meetings in relation to the Design and Success of Methodism. By the Rev. S. W. Christophers. Crown 8vo. Price 3s.
- Rigg (J. H.) The Connexional Economy of Wesleyan Methodism in its Ecclesiastical and Spiritual Aspects. By James H. Rigg, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 3s. 6d.
- Rigg (J. H.) The Churchmanship of John Wesley, and the Relations of Wesleyan Methodism to the Church of England. By JAMES H. Rigg, D.D. Crown 8vo. Price 2s.6d.
- Stevens (A.) The History of Methodism from its Origin to the Centenary Year. By ABEL STEVENS, LL.D. Three Volumes Crown 8vo. With Portraits. Price 15s.

GENERAL LITERATURE.

PRICE FOUR SHILLINGS.

- Our Indian Empire: Its Rise and Growth. By the Rev. J. Shaw Banks. Imperial 16mo. Thirty-five Illustrations and Map.
- Zoology of the Bible. By HARLAND COULTAS. Preface by the Rev. W. F. Moulton, D.D. Imperial 16mo. 126 Illustrations.
- Missionary Anecdotes, Sketches, Facts, and Incidents.

 By the Rev. WILLIAM MOISTER. Imperial 16mo. Eight Page Illustrations.
- Northern Lights; or, Pen and Pencil Sketches of Nineteen Modern Scottish Worthies. By the Rev. J. MARRAT. Crown 8vo. Portraits and Illustrations.

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE.

- Rambles in Bible Lands. By the Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D. Imperial 16mo. Seventy Illustrations.
- Land of the Mountain and the Flood': Scottish Scenes and Scenery delineated. By the Rev. JABEZ MARRAT. Imperial 16mo. Map and Seventy-six Illustrations.
- Popery, Prelacy, and Patronage. Biographical Illustrations of Scotch Church History. Imperial 16mo. Ten Illustrations.
- Wycliffe to Wesley: Heroes and Martyrs of the Church in Britain. Imperial r6mo. Twenty-four Portraits and Forty other Illustrations.
- John Lyon; or, From the Depths. By RUTH ELLIOTT. Crown 8vo. Five Full-page Illustrations.
- Chronicles of Capstan Cabin; or, the Children's Hour. By J. JACKSON WRAY. Imperial 16mo. Twenty-eight Illustrations.
- The Life of Gideon Ouseley. By the Rev. WILLIAM ABTHUR, M.A. Eighth Thousand. Crown 8vo. With Portrait.
- Missionary Stories, Narratives, Scenes, and Incidents.

 By the Rev. W. Moister. Crown 8vo. Eight Page Illustrations.
 - REV. BENJAMIN SMITH'S WORKS.
- Sunshine in the Kitchen; or, Chapters for Maid Servants.

 Fourth Thousand Crown 8vo. Numerous Illustrations.
- Way-Marks: Placed by Royal Authority on the King's Highway. Being One Hundred Scripture Proverbs, Enforced and Illustrated. Crown 8vo. Eight Page Engravings.
- Gems Reset; or, the Wesleyan Catechisms Illustrated by Imagery and Narrative. Crown 8vo.
- Vice-Royalty; or, A Royal Domain held for the King, and enriched by the King. Crown 8vo. Twelve page Illustrations.

PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.

Glimpses of India and Mission Life. By Mrs. HUTCHEON.
Crown 8vo. Eight Page Illustrations. Cloth, gilt edges.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE.

Little Abe: or, the Bishop of Berry Brow. Being the Life of Abraham Lockwood, a quaint and popular Local Preacher in the Methodist New Connexion. By F. JEWELL. Crown 8vo Cloth, gilt edges. With Portrait.

Cecily; A Tale of the English Reformation. By EMMA LESLIE. Crown 8vo Five full page Illust.

Glimpses of India and Mission Life. By Mrs. HUTCHRON. Crown 8vo. Eight Page Illustrations.

The Beloved Prince A Memoir of His Royal Highness, the Prince Consort. By WILLIAM NICHOLS. Crown 8vo. With Portrait and Nineteen Illustrations. Cloth. eilt edges.

Cloth, gilt edges.
The Lancasters and their
Friends. A Tale of Methodist Life.
By S. J. F. Crown 8vo.

Glenwood; A Story of School Life. By Julia K. Bloompirid

Crown 8vo. Seven Illustrations.
Undeceived; Roman or Anglican? A Story of English Ritualism. Crown 8vo.

Self-Culture and Self-Reliance, under God the Means of Self-Elevation. By the Rev. W. Unsworth. Crown 8vo. Old Daniel; or, Memoirs of a Converted Hindu, with Description of Village Life in India. By the Rev. T. Honson Coloured Illustrations. Crown 8vo., gilt edges.

A Pledge that Redeemed

A Pledge that Redeemed Itself, By Sarson, Author of Bind Olive, etc. Crown 8vo. Numerous Illustrations. Cloth, gilt edges. The Story of a Peninsular

The Story of a Peninsular Veteran: Sergeant in the 43rd Light Infantry during the Peninsular War. Crown 8vo. 13 Illustrations.

Rays from the Sun of Righteousness. By the Rev. RICHARD NEWTON, D.D. Crown 8vo. Eleven Illustrations. Cloth, gilt edges.

In the Tropics; or, Scenes and Incidents of West Indian Life. By the Rev JABEZ MARRAT. Crown 8vo., with Illustrations, &c.

Climbing: A Manual for the Young who Desire to Rise in Both Worlds. By the Rev. BENJAMIN SMITH. Crown 8vo. Sixth Edition.

Our Visit to Rome, with Notes by the Way. By the Rev. JOHN RHODES. Royal rômo. Forty-five Illustrations.

Gems of Piety in Humble Life. By the Rev. T. H. WALKER. Royal 18mo. Eight Page Illustrations.

MARK GUY PEARSE'S WORKS.

Seven Volumes, Crown 800., Cloth, Gilt Edges. Price 2s. 6d. each.

I.—Daniel Quorm, and his Religious Notions. First
Series. Fiftieth Thousand.

2.—Daniel Quorm, and his Religious Notions. Second Series. Fifteenth Thousand.

3.—Sermons for Children. Fourteenth Thousand.

 Mister Horn and His Friends; or, Givers and Giving. Sixteenth Thousand.

5.—Short Stories: and other Papers. Fourth Thousand.

 Good Will': a Collection of Christmas Stories, Fifth Thousand,

7.—Homely Talks. Fifth Thousand.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS.

Homes and Home Life in Bible Lands. By J. R. S. CLIFFORD. Foolscap 8vo. Eighty Illustrations. Hid Treasures, and the Search for Them: Lectures to Bible Classes. By the Rev. J. HARTLEY. Foolscap 8vo. With Frontispiece.

The Great Apostle; or, Pictures from the Life of St. Paul. By Rev. JABEZ MARRAT. Foolscap 8vo. 28 Illustrations and Map.

Martin Luther, the Prophet of Germany. By the Rev. J. Shaw Banks, Foolscap 8vo. 13 Illustus.

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS-continued.

Youthful Obligations. Illustrated by a large number of Appropriate Facts and Anecdotes. Fcap. 8vo. With Illustrations.

Eminent Christian Philanthropists. Brief Biographical Sketches, designed especially as Studies for the Young. By the Rev. Grorge Maunder. Fcap. 8vo. Nine Illustrations.

The Tower, the Temple, and the Minster: Historical and Biographical Associations of the Tower of London, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey. By the Rev. J. W. THOMAS. Second Edition. Foolscap 8vo. 14 Illustrations.

The Prisoner's Friend: The Life of Mr. James Bundy, of Bristol. By his Grandson, the Rev. W. R. WILLIAMS. Foolscap 8vo. Peter Pengelly; or, 'True as the Clock.' By J. J. WRAY. Crown 8vo. Forty Illustrations.
The Stolen Children: Fcap.

8vo. Six Illustrations.

My Coloured Schoolmaster, and other Stories. By the Rev. H. Bleby. Fcap. 8vo. Five Illustns. Female Heroism and Tales of the Western World. By the Rev. HENRY BLEBY. Foolscap 8vo. Four Illustrations.

Capture of the Pirates: with other Stories of the Western Seas. By the Rev. Henry Bleby. Fcap. 8vo. Four Illustrations.

Adelaide's Treasure, and How the Thief came Unawares. By SARSON, Author of 'A Pledge that Redeemed Itself,' etc. Four Illustrations.

PRICE EIGHTEENPENCE.

'Little Ray' Series. Royal 16mo. Little Ray and Her Friends. | Ned's Mott

By RUTH ELLIOTT. Five Page Illustrations.
The Royal Road to Riches.

The Royal Road to Riches.

By E. H. MILLER, Fifteen Illustrations.

The Breakfast Half-Hour.
Addresses on Religious and Moral
Topics. By the Rev. H. R. Burton.
Twenty-five Illustrations.

Gleanings in Natural History for Young People. Profusely Illustrated.

Broken Purposes; or, the Good Time Coming. By LILLIE MONTFORT. Five page Illustrations.

The History of the Tea-Cup; with a Descriptive Account of the Potter's Art. By the Rev. G. R. Wedgwood. Profusely Illustrated.

The Cliftons, and their Play-Hours. By Mrs. Cosslett. Seven Page Illustrations. Ned's Motto; or, Little by Little. By the author of 'Faithful and True,' 'Tony Starr's Legacy.' Six Page Illustrations,

The Bears' Den. By E. H. MILLER, Six Page Illustrations.

A Year at Riverside Farm. By E. H. MILLER. Royal 16mo. Six Page Illustrations.

The Lilyvale Club and its Doings. By Edwin A. Johnson, D.D. Royal rómo. Seven Page Illustrations.

Maude Linden; or, Working for Jesus. By LILLIE MONTFORT. Four Illustrations.

Oscar's Boyhood; or, The Sailor's Son. By DANIEL WISE, D.D. Six Illustrations.

Summer Days at Kirkwood. By E. H. MILLER. Four Illustrations.

'Wee Donald' Series.

An Old Sailor's Yarn: and other Sketches from Daily Life. The Stony Road: A Tale of Humble Life. Stories for Willing Ears. For Boys, By T. S. E.

Stories for Willing Ears, For Girls. By T. S. E. Thirty Thousand Pounds: and other Sketches from Daily Life. 'Wee Donald': Sequel to 'Stony Road,'

PRICE EIGHTEENPENCE. Foolscap 800. Series.

Three Indian Heroes: the Missionary; the Soldier; the Statesman. By the Rev. J. SHAW BANKS. Third Edition. Numerous Illustrations.

David Livingstone, Missionary and Discoverer. By the Rev. J. MARRAT. Fifteen Page Illustrations.

Columbus; or, The Discovery of America. By George Cubitt. Seventeen Illustrations.

Cortes; or, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico. By GEORGE CUBITT. Nine Illustrations. Pizarro; or, The Discovery and Conquest of Peru. By GEORGE CUBITT. Nine Illustrations.

Granada; or, The Expulsion of the Moors from Spain. By GRORGE CUBITT. Seven Illustrations.

James Montgomery, Christian Poet and Philanthropist. By the Rev. J. MARRAT. Eleven Illustrations.

The Father of Methodism.

A Sketch of the Life and Labours
of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. For
Young People. By Mrs. Cosslett.
Second Edition, enlarged. Fortyfive Illustrations.

A Pledge that Redeemed Itself, By Sarson.

Old Truths in New Lights. Illustrations of Scripture Truth for the Young. By W. H. S. Numerous Illustrations.

Chequer Alley: A Story of Successful Christian Work. By the Rev. Frederick W. Briggs, M.A. Eleventh Edition.

The Englishman's Bible:
How he Got it, and Why he Keeps
it. By Rev. John Boyes, M.A.
With Thirteen Illustrations.

Home: and the Way to
Make Home Happy. By the Rev.
David Hay. With Frontispiece.

Helen Leslie; or, Truth and Error. By ADELINE. With Frontispiece.

Daniel Quorm, and his Religious Notions. First Series. Cheap Edition.

Daniel Quorm, and his Religious Notions. Second Series. Cheap Edition.

Building Her House. By Mrs. R. A. Watson. Five Illustrations.

Rays from the Sun of Righteousness. By the Rev. R. Newton. Eleven Illustrations.

Memorials of Miss Hannah Ball, of High Wycombe: the First Methodist Sunday School Teacher.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND FOURPENCE.

The Boatman's Daughter. A Narrative for the Learned and the Unlearned. By the Rev. ALFRED BARRETT. 18mo. With Frontispiece.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

Royal 16mo. Cloth, gilt lettered.

Ancient Egypt: Its Monuments, Worship, and People. By the Rev. EDWARD LIGHTWOOD. Twenty-six Illustrations.

Vignettes from English History. By the Rev. James Yeames. First Series. From the Norman Conqueror to Henry IV. Twentythree Illustrations.

Lessons from Noble Lives, and other Stories. Thirty-one Illustrations. Margery's Christmas Box.
By RUTH ELLIOTT. Seven Illusts.
Stories of Love and Duty.
For Boys and Girls. Thirty-one
Illustrations,

No Gains without Pains: A
True Life for the Boys. By H. C.
KNIGHT. Six Illustrations.

Peeps into the Far North: Chapters on Iceland, Lapland, and Greenland. By S. E. SCHOLES. Twenty-four Illustrations. The Railway Pioneers; or, The Story of the Stephensons, Father and Son. By H.C. KNIGHT. Fifteen Illustrations.

22.

7.

Ë.

The Royal Disciple: Louisa, Queen of Prussia. By C. R. HURST. Six Illustrations.

Tiny Tim: A Story of London Life. Founded on Fact. By FRANCIS HORNER. Twenty - two Illustrations.

John Tregenoweth; His Mark. By MARK GUY PRARSE. Twenty-five Illustrations.

'I'll Try'; or, How the Farmer's Son became a Captain. Ten Illustrations.

The Giants, and How to Fight Them. By Dr. RICHARD NEWTON. Fifteen Illustrations.

The Meadow Daisy. LILLIE MONTFORT. Numerous Illus-

Robert Dawson; or, The Brave Spirit. Four Page Illustrations.

The Tarnside Evangel. By M. A. H. Eight Illustrations.
Rob Rat; A Story of Barge
Life. By MARK GUY PEARSE. Numerous Illustrations.

The Unwelcome Baby, and what Became of Him; with other Stories of noble Lives Early Consecrated. By S. ELLEN GRE-GORY. Nine Illustrations.

Jane Hudson, the American Girl. Four Page Illustrations.

The Babes in the Basket; or, Daph and her Charge. Four Page Illustrations.

Insect Lights and Sounds. By J. R. S. CLIFFORD, author of 'Animals of the Bible,' etc., etc. Profusely Illustrated.

Leaves from a Mission House in India. By Mrs. HUTCHEON. Royal 16mo. Price 1s.

The Jew and His Tenants. By A. D. Walker. Illust. The History of Joseph: for the Young. By the Rev. T. Champ-NESS. Twelve Illustrations.

Incidents in my Bible-class: Records of Successful Toil in Senior Bible-class Teaching. By C. R. PARSONS. Foolscap 8vo. Price 18. William the Silent, Prince of Orange. A Biographical Sketch. By the Rev. J. W. Thomas. Foolscap 8vo. With Portrait.

Life on the Waves; or, Memorials of Captain George LEONARD. By the Rev. A. LANGLEY. With Illustrations. 18mo.

PRICE NINEPENCE.

- Imperial 32mo. Cloth, Illuminated. 1. The Wonderful Lamp; and other Stories. By RUTH ELLIOTT, Five Illustrations.
- 2. Dick's Troubles; and How He Met Them. By RUTH ELLIOTT. Six Illustrations.
- 3. The Chat in the Meadow: and other Stories. By LILLIE MONT-FORT. Six Illustrations.
- 4. John's Teachers: and other Stories. By LILLIE MONTFORT. Six Illustrations.
- 5. Nora Grayson's Dream; and other Stories. By LILLIE MONT-FORT. Seven Illustrations.

- 6. Rosa's Christmas Invitations; and other Stories. By LILLIE MONTFORT. Six Illustrations.
- Ragged Jim's Last Song; and other Ballads. By EDWARD BAILEY. Eight Illustrations.
- 8. Pictures from Memory. ADELINE. Nine Illustrations.
- 9. The Story of the Wreck of the Maria Mail Boat: with a Memoir of Mrs. Hincksman, the only Survivor. Illustrated.
- 10. Passages from the Life of Heinrich Stilling. Five Page Illustrations.

16

PRICE NINEPENCE-continued.

- II. Little and Wise: The Ants, The Conies, The Locusts, and The Spiders. By the Rev. W. W. NEWTON. Twelve Illustrations.
- 22. Spoiling the Vines, and Fortune Telling. By the Rev. W. W. NEWTON. Eight Illustrations.
- 13. The Kingly Breaker, Concerning Play, and Sowing the Seed. By the Rev. W. W. NEWTON.
- 14. The Fatherly Guide, Rhoda, and Fire in the Soul. By the Rev. W.W. NEWTON, Twelve Illustus.
- 15. Short Sermons for Little People. By the Rev. T. CHAMPNESS.

- 16. Sketches from my Schoolroom. Four Illustrations.
- 17. Mary Ashton; a True Story of Eighty Years Ago. Four Illustrations.
- 18. The Little Prisoner; or the Story of the Dauphin of France. Five Illustrations.
- 19. The Story of an Apprentice-
- ship. By the Rev. A. LANGLEY.

 20. Mona Bell; or, Faithful in
 Little Things.
- 21. Minnie Neilson's Summer Holidays, and What Came of Them.

The above are sold in Limp Cloth at EIGHTPENCE.

PRICE EIGHTPENCE.

The whole of the Twenty-one Ninepenny books (see preceding page) are sold in Limp Cloth at Eightpence each.

- Precious Seed, and Little Sowers. 18mo. Four Illustrations. Giltedges.
- Janie: A Flower from South Africa. By the Rev. R. LAMPLOUGH. 18mo. With Portrait.
- Freddie Cleminson: The Brief Story of a Blessed Life. By the Rev. T. M'CULLAGH, 18mo, With Portrait, etc.
- Soon and Safe: A Word to the Young Folks. By the Rev. SIMPSON CRUMP. 18mo, Illustrations.
- Christianity Compared with Popery: A Lecture. Death of the Eldest Son. By
- CÆSAR MALAN.
- Emily's Lessons; or, Chapters in the Life of a Young Christian. Fragments for Young People.
- History of Joseph. By AGNES BULMER.
- Jonathan Saville's Life. By the Rev. F. A. WEST.
- The Sunday Scholar's Guide. By the Rev. J. T. BARR. PRICE SIXPENCE.

Cloth. Illuminated, and Coloured Frontispiece.

- z. A Kiss for a Blow: Stories about Peace and War.
- 2. Louis Henrie; or, The Sister's Promise.
- 3. The Giants, and How to Fight Them. By Dr. R. Newton.
- 4. Robert Dawson; or, the Brave Spirit.
- 5. Jane Hudson, the American Girl.
- 6. The Jewish Twins.
 7. The Book of Beasts.
- 8. The Book of Birds. Illust.
- g. Proud in Spirit. 10. Althea Norton.
- II. Gertrude's Bible Lesson. 12. The Rose in the Desert.
- 13. The Little Black Hen. 14. Martha's Hymn.

- 15. Nettie Mathieson.
- 16. The Prince in Disguise.17. The Children on the Plains.18. The Babes in the Basket.
- 19. Richard Harvey; or, Taking a Stand.
- 20. Kitty King: Lessons for Little 20. Kitty Ang.
 Girls.
 21. Nettie's Mission.
 22. Little Margery.
 23. Margery's City Home.
 24. The Crossing Sweeper.
 25. Rosy Conroy's Lessons.

- 26. Ned Dolan's Garret.
- 27. Little Henry and his Bearer, 28. Little Woodman and his
 - Dog Cæsar. Johnny: Lessons for Little
- Boys. The above are sold in Ornamental Stiff Covers at FOURPENCE each,

WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,

2. Castle-Street, City-Road; and 66, Paternoster-Row.

-			-			٠,			
<		•		•					
					•	•			
1						•			
	•								
	•								
							*		

. •

